

## Comparative Analysis of the Venezuelan Exodus Within the Framework of the Expanded Mercosur Residence Agreement

### Análisis comparado del éxodo venezolano en el marco del Acuerdo sobre Residencia del Mercosur ampliado

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#### ABSTRACT

This document questions how the degree of integration in the region is evolving concerning the migration issue, which allows us to reflect on how consolidated the migration regional governance (GRM) is in countries such as Argentina and Uruguay, which are Member States of the Mercosur Residence Agreement (ARM) and Colombia and Peru which are associate countries to this same agreement, in a context of the high level of Venezuelan emigration through this South American subregion. A mixed methodology, qualitatively and quantitatively, was used. It was evidenced that Argentina and Uruguay applied the Mercosur Residence Agreement, with convergence towards a GRM; however, neither Colombia nor Peru applied the ARM until today, but instead, they have adopted ad hoc legal instruments, with which the convergence towards a GRM is weak, and the urgency of the application of regional migration governance is underlined.

*Keywords:* 1. Venezuelan regional migration, 2. regional migratory governance, 3. regionalism, 4. Mercosur, 5. South America.

#### RESUMEN

En este artículo se cuestiona la evolución del grado de integración regional en lo referente al tema migratorio con el fin de reflexionar en torno al nivel de consolidación de la gobernanza regional migratoria (GRM) en Argentina y Uruguay –Estados partes del Acuerdo sobre Residencia del Mercosur (ARM)–, y en Colombia y Perú –países asociados del mismo Acuerdo–, en un contexto de alto flujo migratorio de ciudadanos venezolanos por esta subregión suramericana. La metodología utilizada combina las perspectivas cualitativa y cuantitativa. Se demuestra que en Argentina y Uruguay se aplicó el ARM en convergencia hacia una GRM con instituciones regionales fuertes y una regulación migratoria alineada con el ARM; sin embargo, en Colombia y Perú no se aplicó el acuerdo, pero se asumieron instrumentos jurídicos *ad hoc* con una convergencia débil hacia una GRM y se subraya la urgencia de aplicar una gobernanza de la migración regional.

*Palabras clave:* 1. migración regional venezolana, 2. gobernanza regional migratoria, 3. regionalismo, 4. Mercosur, 5. América del Sur.

Date received: March 7, 2022

Date accepted: November 9, 2022

Original version (Spanish) published online February 28, 2024

Translation (English) published online: April 16, 2024

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INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is responsible for formulating the global regulation that guarantees the unrestricted mobility of international trade and capital. However, as proposed by Lavenex (2016) and Betts (2011), thus far, it is evident that no order formally regulates, addresses, and integrates the global problem of migration whose issues: labor migration, irregular migration, asylum, human trafficking, return, etc. are disaggregated and addressed by different international organizations.

The countries receiving large regional migration flows and international organizations have opened informal spaces to discuss the management of intraregional migration flows (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2001; Harns, 2013). In such spaces, governmental and non-governmental representatives meet to discuss issues of mutual interest related to migration (Solomon, 2005) at the regional or multilateral level, reach non-binding agreements (Acosta Arcarazo et al., 2019; Organización Internacional para las Migraciones [OIM], 2018; Brumat et al., 2008), and create new partnerships between the countries involved. These forums are known as the Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs). According to Lavenex (2016), RCPs focus on controlling unwanted migration flows and related security aspects.

The Residence Agreement for Citizens of the Member States of Mercosur—from now on referred to as the Mercosur Residence Agreement (ARM, acronym in Spanish)—contains provisions on the free movement of persons within the region, with which the signatory countries express their willingness to cooperate in the decisions taken on migration issues, also allowing them to make visible the tension that exists concerning the issue of sovereignty when the common agreements signed are not complied with. The ARM represents a step forward in regional migration policy since migrants need only certify that they are citizens of one of the signatory states to the agreement to obtain permanent or temporary residence in another signatory state. According to Mercosur's migration regulations, it is not a requirement to prove employment, family reunification, or studies, among others, to obtain residence (Ramírez, 2016; OIM, 2018).

Argentina and Uruguay have a friendly migration framework that aims to align migration policies regionally through the ARM, which ratified the internalization of the agreement in each of the signatory countries on July 28, 2009, and is legally effective in the bloc. The regulation applied to Venezuelan migration in Argentina can be found in the preamble of its Constitution, which seeks the freedom and prosperity of all men of the world who wish to live in this nation; it also applies all benefits established in the agreement to Venezuelan citizens. Some measures and provisions that served as concessions to these immigrants were also managed.

The National Directorate of Migration (DNM, acronym in Spanish) of Argentina reported that from 2006 to 2009, 3 332 Venezuelans seeking to regularize their migratory status in the country settled in Argentina; it is also noted that, five years later, this community became the largest in the

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<sup>2</sup> This article is a product of the research project titled “El COVID-19 y los cambios en el orden mundial de la pospandemia,” funded by the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia (INV 3066).

country, increasing from 5 700 residents in 2014 to 27 000 new residents in 2017. Data provided by the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V Platform, 2021) inform that in June 2021, 173 207 Venezuelan immigrants were living in Argentina.

In Uruguay, Law 18250 of 2008 is integrated into current legislation. It provides a recognition perspective of equal human rights between migrants and Uruguayan citizens, as established by the International Organization for Migration (OIM, 2018). Through several references, Law 18250 highlights the level of openness of Uruguayan migration policy at the regional level (Ceriani Cernadas, 2018; Acosta Arcarazo & Freier, 2015; Ceriani Cernadas & Freier, 2015). The 1996 Uruguayan census noted that 737 Venezuelans lived in Uruguay, which increased to 3 773 in 2017, according to Montiel and Prieto (2019). The records on residence confirm the fundamental increase in the migratory flow of Venezuelans since the regulation of the ARM (OIM, 2018). Between 2009 and 2014, the agreement's implementation period, 8 841 residencies were granted to citizens of the Mercosur Member States and associate countries, a figure far surpassed by the number of residencies between 2016 and 2017. Platform R4V (2021) reports that 14 900 Venezuelans with regular status are settled in Uruguay, including people with residence permits, and that there are 607 Venezuelan asylum seekers.

On the other hand, Peru and Colombia signed the Residence Agreement for Citizens of the Member States of Mercosur; Peru adhered on June 28, 2011, and Colombia on June 29, 2012. Bolivia and Chile signed the ARM on December 6, 2002 (OIM, 2018). Title III, Chapter I of Resolution 4130 of 2013 details the requirements for Mercosur nationals to obtain temporary residence. In 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through decree 941/2014, incorporated visas to the internal migratory order provided for in the ARM framework and dictated other migratory provisions. That same year, the implementation as an associate state was achieved, and the right to reside and work in the territory formed by Mercosur Member States and associate countries (Chile, Ecuador, and Peru) was obtained. The agreement presents the protocols for processing the residence of nationals of the Mercosur associate countries to guarantee the mobility rights of these citizens.

According to Migración Colombia (2022), as of February 2022, 2 477 588 Venezuelan citizens had entered the country, of which 1 231 675 were in the process of regularization, 333 806 were already regularized, 617 069 were in the Temporary Protection Status processing stage, and 295 038 were in an irregular migration status. Meanwhile, in Peru, there are 1 049 970 Venezuelan immigrants; among them, 496 095 are asylum seekers, and 477 060 have regularized their status. These numbers show that these two countries account for more than 50% of the Venezuelan citizens in the sub-region.

Although on August 5, 2017, Venezuela was suspended from its status as a Mercosur Member State, residence was granted to Venezuelan citizens in Argentina and Uruguay. Meanwhile, since August 2017, Colombia and Peru have suspended the benefits given to Venezuelan citizens by the ARM. Venezuelan immigration at the intraregional level allows us to analyze and reflect on the level of consolidation of regional migration governance (GRM, acronym in Spanish) in Argentina

and Uruguay as Mercosur Member States and Colombia and Peru as associate countries of the Mercosur Residence Agreement.

The hypothesis in this paper argues that the migration policy established in the Mercosur integration process, fundamentally assumed by the associated countries, has remained fragmented and differentiated compared to the Member States of this agreement. The lack of internalization of the agreements by these countries manifests the existing misalignment between global problems, supranational problems, and national objectives, as seen through the Venezuelan migratory process through the subregion, showing an inability to offer regional solutions. At the same time, Argentina and Uruguay have internalized the ARM more comprehensively. This article examines the migration governance framework in the context of implementing the Mercosur Residence Agreement by the Member States and associate countries through the Venezuelan migration process.

The first section contextualizes the immigration of Venezuelans to Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia, and Peru through a characterization of this migratory flow and a brief presentation of current regulations. The theoretical framework then examines the taxonomy of migration regional governance with a multi-level approach, the nuances of regional interaction, and the possible dimensions of regional migration regimes. The third section highlights methodological aspects, where this research is outlined as mixed (qualitative and quantitative). The last section presents the results and, finally, the conclusions.

#### FRAME OF REFERENCE

This article defines governance as a set of rules, roles, and social practices built on top of the national state. Governance can help distinguish the different levels, institutional arrangements, and types of coordination involved in negotiating and adopting a regional migration policy. It also contributes to the understanding of a multidimensional migration regime by detecting fractures in the international legal order based on three approaches: the economic approach, which favors human mobility as a factor of production; the human rights approach, based on the civil and social rights of migrants; and the security of nations approach, which emphasizes the control and prevention of irregular migration (Betts, 2011; Lavenex et al., 2016; Montenegro Braz, 2018).

Regional migration governance is understood as cooperation resulting from autonomous decisions made by the regional governments. The GRM aims to solve global or regional problems or challenges created in a globalizing process. This is what Börzel (2016), Lavenex et al., (2016), and Oyarzún (2008) believe could explain the emergence of the Mercosur Residence Agreement. The existing irregular migration problems in Argentina and Brazil's interest in strengthening Mercosur's social agenda were overcome by creating the ARM (Lavenex et al., 2016; OIM, 2014).

*Classification of Regional Migration Governance and Nuances in Regional Interaction*

Regional migration policies will be analyzed at the organizational level through the GRM classification proposal by Lavenex et al., (2016), and Lahav and Lavenex (2012). As can be seen in Table 1, this classification seeks to identify the fractures of the international legal order through the following approaches: economic—focused on facilitating mobility—, security—focused on attention to migration control—, and one based on migrants’ rights. This organizational dimension specifies the extent to which substantive provisions are institutionalized through two aspects: 1) the degree of legalization in terms of obligation, precision, and enforceability of the provisions, and 2) the extent to which decision-making procedures are permanent and formalized or on the verge of informality; this makes it possible to define the scope or limitations, or both, of regional norms.

Table 1. Dimensions of Regional Migration Regimes

Level of regionalism	Liberalization/mobility	Control/security	Protection/rights	Factor indicator	Legalization
Very strong: 4	Access to full rights for all citizens and access to the labor market.	Harmonization of entry requirements, joint external border management, and exchange of liaison officers.	Harmonization that goes beyond the United Nations Convention on Migrant Workers and their Families.	1.5	Supranational commitments, independent monitoring, supranational judicial review.
Strong: 3	Access to the labor market for all citizens with limited stay.	Common rules on border management requirements and operational cooperation.	Harmonization based on the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.	1	International law commitments, judicial and political review mechanisms.
Partial: 2	Access to labor markets and with limited stay.	Common rules on border management requirements.	Common standards on specific social and economic rights for workers.	0.75	International law commitments without supervision and review mechanisms.
Weak: 1	Facilitated entry procedures, no access to the labor market.	Exchange of best practices in immigration control systems.	Exchange of best practices on the protection of migrants’ rights.	0.5	Soft legislation coordination with or without monitoring.
Uncovered: 0	-	-	-	0	-

Source: Elaborated by the author based on Lavenex (2019).

*Regional Migratory Governance  
with a Multi-level Approach*

It is possible to delve into the study by incorporating three additional dimensions: on the one hand, integration and the capacity to encompass, and on the other, the organizational dimension from an institutional approach that facilitates examining the degree of legalization in terms of obligation and compliance with established regulations, as well as determining whether the decisions made are permanent or circumstantial, formal or informal.

Distinguishing the various degrees of regionalism from the proposed dimensions is feasible, considering the scope and depth of the aspects weighted by the regional provisions (weak, partial, strong, and very strong). The institutional approach is observed through the organizational dimension and acts as a qualifier.

Lavenex (2019) applies the multi-level approach to the GRM taxonomy, for which, on the ordinate of a Cartesian plane, the degree of intraregional horizontal integration is located by showing the possible interactions between multiple institutions within a region, which can be established as parallel, overlapping or encompassing. The abscissa shows institutional interaction, where nesting alludes to a vertical relationship between a regional organization with a smaller membership and a larger global institution within the same functional policy area.

The fundamental theoretical references on multi-level regional governance have been presented by Hooghe and Marks (2003) and Panizzon and Van Riemsdijk (2019), while the most relevant literature on the institutional interrelation regime has been proposed from international relations by Alter and Hooghe (2016); Raustiala and Victor (2004), and Alter and Meunier (2009).

At the horizontal intraregional level, there are two types of institutions: type I institutions are multipurpose, acting through joint organizations that make decisions with a broad mandate; their sphere of action is territorially established, and relations are hierarchically structured. Type II regional institutions are confined to specific sectors or functional areas; membership in such organizations follows functional rather than territorial lines; they are flexible and more horizontal, make less-formal decisions, and address different issues.

Parallel regimes are at the lowest level of horizontal regional integration as regional migration institutions are characterized by not creating any formal linkages. In overlapping regimes, regional institutions cover the same functions, have some organizational and formal linkages, or both. If a parallel regime is brought together with an overlaying or overlapping regime, horizontal interaction is comprehensively covered, implying regional migratory governance.

## METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

This paper adopted mixed methods research combining qualitative and quantitative perspectives through a comparative study between Colombia and Peru, given that these countries have been the ones with the highest reception of Venezuelan immigrants in the last seven years, as opposed to Argentina and Uruguay, the ARM Member States that apply this agreement to Venezuelan migrants. Since this topic has little development, the research design was exploratory-analytical-descriptive.

The research techniques used in this study were semi-structured interviews, review and analysis of primary documentation and secondary documents. The necessary information was collected between March and November 2019 in Colombia (Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, and Cúcuta), Argentina (Buenos Aires, San Salvador de Jujuy, and Mendoza), Uruguay (Montevideo) and Peru (Lima and Trujillo). The research was developed in several stages: the first involved searching, collecting, filtering, and systematizing secondary sources (statistics, reports, specific bibliography, official documents, etc.). Bibliometric studies were also conducted to provide information on documents that made it possible to develop the conceptual framework and present the results.

In another stage, information was collected through semi-structured interviews (face-to-face and virtual) in the host countries of Venezuelan citizens with informants whose natural/legal identity will remain confidential, including governmental organizations (GOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), trade unions, nonprofit organizations (NPOs), associations, federations, and researchers (R) working on migration and migration governance issues. The detailed information obtained from these sources made it possible to describe the particularities of implementing Mercosur's migration governance framework for Venezuelans.

Furthermore, 40 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the four sources of information in the four countries (10 interviews in each country). In the different organizations, the job positions of the participants were diverse: directors of international organizations, heads of migration offices or state entities, and CSO coordinators. Interviews with leaders of Venezuelan immigrant associations in Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia, and Peru were conducted using the snowball sampling method. Meanwhile, informants from CSOs and GOs were selected based on their roles in matters related to the enforcement of migration regulations in each country under study and the protection of vulnerable Venezuelan migrants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the GOs based on 15 questions, of which 13 were common to all interviewees, and two focused on the issues of legalization and institutionalization. The latter responds to an organizational dimension where substantive provisions are formalized through two aspects: the degree of legalization in terms of obligation, precision, and applicability of the provisions and the extent to which the decision-making procedures are permanent and formalized or are on the edge of informality, which allows defining the scope or limitations of the regional regulations, i.e., through an institutional analysis.

The structuring of the index on the regional taxonomy of migration governance is based on the four analytical approaches presented by Lavenex (2016); furthermore, a semi-structured interview was proposed to obtain a quantitative and qualitative analytical framework. A set of three types of questions was designed for each factor to calculate the index: a) to contextualize the information (descriptive question), b) to evaluate on a Likert scale (evaluative question), and c) to validate the evaluative response (validating question).

### *Weighting and Evaluation Criteria*

The response scale determined for the evaluative questions has assigned values between 0 and 1.5. These are obtained through Likert scale-based response options, providing relations of conformity, identification, or acceptance of certain postulates about the topics consulted. The validation answers directly impact the value obtained from the evaluative questions. The same value is maintained if the answer is consistent and coherent with the evaluative question; if inconsistencies exist, a weighting of 0.5 is applied, indicating that the initial evaluation is partially accepted.

By calculating the weighted average of the answers, the total result of the measurement is found for each country, bearing in mind that the number of questions varies for some observables and each typology of the consulted group. It should be emphasized that the scores for each country will be assigned based on the answers provided by the two groups analyzed to each evaluative and validation question as a result of what emerges from the descriptive questions and the replications made.

### *Scoring Ranges*

Table 2 shows the values established by the type of evaluative response. The response “Don’t know/no answer” may be related to insufficient information or consensus, which may prevent assessing the status of a given observable element of the factors.

Table 2. Values Assigned by Type of Evaluative Response

Scale	Weighting	Scale	Weighting	Scale	Weighting
Very often	1.5	Always	1.5	Very strong	1.5
Frequently	1	Many times	1	Strong	1
Occasionally, rarely	0.75	Sometimes	0.75	Partial	0.75
Never	0.5	Never	0.5	Weak	0.5
Don't know/no answer	0	Don't know/no answer	0	Don't know/no answer	0

Source: Own elaboration.



## RESULTS

The *economic mobility* approach is the most developed aspect of regional migration governance for the four countries, obtaining the following results: Argentina (1.42), Uruguay (1.48), Peru (0.89), and Colombia (0.84). According to the scale adopted, these values place the first two Member States of the Mercosur agreement as very strong, where all citizens have full access to rights and the labor market with unlimited stay. Meanwhile, Peru and Colombia, Mercosur associate countries, are placed as strong, implying access to the labor market with limited stay for all citizens (see Table 3). This can be better understood from the information provided by the various sources interviewed in the different countries involved.

In Argentina, most CSOs agree with the following: “You have all the rights. You can enter with expired documents; the only thing you can’t do is vote unless you have a permanent national ID” (CSO, personal communication, November 1, 2019).

In addition, one CSO expressed the following criticism:

Law 25871 establishes equality between nationals and foreigners. The emphasis is not on the legal aspects or the rights they are entitled to. The problem is that the enforcement agencies are managing the public policies—in this case, the migration office—to establish provisions for humanitarian reasons if it has made provisions that seem to facilitate some things, but in practice, it does not focus on what is established; there is a gap between what is set in the legal regulation by an administrative body and what is applied to the population. This is transparent to facilitate an apostille of legal background [...], which implied facilitating this requirement, and nevertheless, the files processed had no resolution. Today, the apostille is possible but inaccessible (CSO, personal communication, November 1, 2019).

Uruguayan interviewees alluded to this in the following terms:

When you arrive in this country, you can obtain citizenship. The only thing you do not have access to is political rights. One does not usually know that Uruguay has separate nationality and citizenship. You can start the citizenship process between three and five years as a permanent resident; however, the Uruguayan passport states whether you are a Uruguayan national or citizen (CSO, personal communication, November 6, 2019).

The responses obtained from Colombian governmental organizations agree that “they enjoy the rights that are normatively and institutionally assigned according to the migratory status of each immigrant” (GO, personal communication, August 5, 2019).

On the other hand, several CSOs agreed to establish the following:

There are citizen rights; the problem is that there is a lack of knowledge of the regulations on both sides in the provision of services in this same access; providing this access is what becomes a limitation. The law is there, but I might not know it, nor do the immigrants or the public officials; they also don’t know how to handle my situation because I am a migrant. That becomes a barrier (CSO, personal communication, August 10, 2019).

Information provided by interviewees in Peru states that “the rights that are normatively and institutionally assigned according to the migratory status of each immigrant are enjoyed” (GO, personal communication, October 7, 2019). One of the immigrant associations in Peru noted that: Access to rights and economic mobility is weak in this country due to structural weaknesses and public officials’ lack of knowledge of the laws. Public officials disrespect the very documents provided by the state (CSO, personal communication, October 8, 2019).

Since its signing, the Mercosur Residence Agreement represented a significant step forward in protecting the human rights of immigrants by establishing a common regulation to grant them residence permits in signatory countries. However, the instruments specified in this agreement and their implementation by Member States and associate countries are not the most favorable for protecting the rights of refugees and asylum seekers since they do not guarantee access to international protection mechanisms (Bello, 2015). Mercosur’s instruments make no explicit reference to asylum or refugee protection.

Concerning asylum and refuge, the Mercosur countries are signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention (Convention relating to the Status of Refugees) and its 1967 Protocol (Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees) and have been adopting, to varying degrees, measures for effective compliance with these provisions. The Mercosur integration agreement poses the challenge of starting to work with what already exists, aiming to achieve a legislative harmonization that adopts a regulation that seeks the protection of refugees, supplemented with regionally designed instruments on human rights and with the supervision of bodies such as the Inter-American Court on Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Galindo Vélez, 2011).

Consistent with the above, the Cartagena process on refugees was developed to respond to the situation of Central American refugees. This consultative process is renewed every ten years. At the meeting of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, Latin American countries welcomed the Cartagena+30 process, which is the result of the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action (Brazil Declaration), where a labor mobility program was formulated that complements the prevailing migration policy in Mercosur, through regional cooperation and solidarity mechanisms that seek to provide solutions to refugees (Bello, 2015). This refugee dimension is classified by Lavenex (2019) “as nested, but with a ‘partial’ regime comprising common rules on specific refugee issues” (p. 11); however, this research did not work on this dimension due to the broad scope of the topic.

In the Mercosur regional integration process, the participating countries state that this project aims to accelerate economic development processes with social justice. This initiative has been evolving through consensus with the region’s countries, which today is called expanded or political Mercosur.

Within the framework of supranational migration, the Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs) and, in the case of this study, the South American Conference on Migration (SACM) have been developed. The SACM has proposed regional guidelines for migration policies and has brought forward dynamics of reciprocal action between it and the subregional migration forums, as well as with the national policies of the South American governments (OIM, 2010). The

SACM has adhered to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Resolution 45/158 of 1990), which highlights the mission of ensuring the human rights of migrants, the exercise of full citizenship, respect for the right to return and reincorporation into their country of origin, recognition of the positive impact of migration and, in addition, the recognition of the rights of migrants in the process of regional integration, as highlighted in the meetings of the SACM. The commitments made at these meetings can be seen in the progress made on migration issues in the Mercosur and Andean Community (CAN) agreements.

Given the proposed theoretical framework, a very strong overlapping regionalism is observed in the countries that are part of the Mercosur agreement on human rights. In this category, both Uruguay and Argentina maintain *very strong* indicators: 1.21 for the former and 1.11 for the latter, which implies a harmonization that exceeds the recommendations established in the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Resolution 45/158 of 1990).

Regarding the issue of human rights, the different sources consulted in Argentina established:

Social rights are equal between immigrants and nationals, which is different if we talk about political rights. Administrative policies prevent people from accessing social security benefits, which require many years of residence to be assigned. For example, in the program for benefits provided by the state for *universal child allowance and foreigners*, parents are required [italics added] to have resided for at least three years. In the case of access to housing, it also requires several years to access it (CSO, personal communication, October 30, 2019).

The information provided by several Uruguayan CSOs concurred in stating: “Regarding health, there is general public coverage. It is worth mentioning the difficulty in accessing housing for both migrants and nationals” (CSO, personal communication, November 7, 2019).

The Uruguayan academy proposed:

There is a strong problem at the level of the educational sector, and it is the slowness in the homologation of careers, which can last from 2 years to 10 years [...] This is due to the resistance of the professional associations that occurs in the University of the Republic. A maximum term of 180 days has now been established to respond to this issue to qualified immigration. This is the Achilles’ heel (university researcher, personal communication, November 9, 2019).

Both Uruguay and Argentina have favored access to ARM benefits for Venezuelan citizens. Any immigrant of this nationality arriving in these countries may obtain temporary residence for two years, after which permanent residence is available. It is a fundamental requirement to prove that in the last five years, there has been no criminal record; on the contrary, it is not required to prove economic solvency. It is necessary to emphasize the flexibility in the procedures required for entry and obtaining residence. Uruguay stipulated that nationals of the Mercosur Member States and Associate States may apply directly for permanent residence, the main requirement being to prove that they do not have a criminal record.

The interviews showed that in both countries, the participants confirmed that, in general, immigrants find it easy to obtain documentation and fundamental rights, such as health and education, but that they tend to face difficulties in areas where nationals also have limitations, such as access to housing. Another issue to be addressed is the validations and approvals countries such as Uruguay have achieved over the last two years. It is necessary to harmonize the migratory legislation of the ARM signatory countries regarding the standardization of classifications or migratory categories, as well as social security systems through the ratification of agreements on this matter at bilateral and multilateral levels; it is also necessary to implement protocols that reduce the time and requirements needed for the recognition of educational qualifications. This implies a harmonization of educational systems.

Regarding human rights, Colombia and Peru present an overlapping regionalism with a *partially strong* indicator of 0.74 and 0.63, respectively, implying common norms on specific social and economic rights for workers. In this respect, one of the interviewees from governmental organizations in Colombia stated that Venezuelan immigrants “enjoy the rights that are normatively and institutionally assigned according to the migratory status of each immigrant” (Sacristán-Rodríguez & Llanez Anaya, 2022, p. 13).

CSOs agree that in human rights issues:

The ministries of education and health have regulations to facilitate access, but the information does not reach the officials for its application. As far as the homologation of the degrees of our professionals is concerned, the process has been very slow, but the issue is being addressed, and I have always said that it must be recognized. In terms of housing, there is no policy for access to housing. On the other hand, it is very difficult to open a savings account or access a loan in a bank in Colombia (CSO, personal communication, July 19, 2019).

Regarding the human rights of people interviewed in Peru, it was stated that “the possibility of entering informal labor is guaranteed. Only a small fraction has the opportunity to work in the formal market” (CSO, personal communication, September 30, 2019). Additionally, they stated:

Rights are conditional on immigration status. But this is different from what is happening with most of the population in recent years. Without documentation, you cannot access a health or employment card. The labor market in Peru is highly informal. This informality lets you quickly access some resources. This market is very open to receive people. The 30% withholding tax for those who receive income in Peru and being a non-domiciled person in Peruvian territory discourages formal work, mainly because the migrant arrives without money and with the need to transfer resources to family members who stayed in Venezuela. Only 10% of the Venezuelan migrant population is registered as formal workers (CSO, personal communication, October 29, 2019).

As a result of the mixture generated by national policies, the hegemonic approach to human mobility, and the influence of international agreements to which the region has adhered, the conception and design of some common instruments on this issue can be observed, such as the free movement of persons, adherence to international agreements for the protection of migrant

workers and their families, the internalization of international agreements in domestic regulations, the care and protection of nationals abroad and common positions compared to third parties. However, Colombia and Peru have not fully harmonized the provisions of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Resolution 45/158 of 1990), as they have not articulated the institutions at different levels to ensure that Venezuelan citizens have real and effective access to their rights.

The evolution of the GRM in this region is in line with some changes in legal agreements and legal frameworks stipulated by international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Labor Organization (ILO), which, from different angles, seek to manage human mobility (Lavenex et al., 2016). Additionally, it is necessary to incorporate the various Regional Consultative Processes on Migration in South America and the South American Conference on Migration (SACM), where the issue of security is not addressed, and what concerns control is fundamentally limited to integrated border controls and to having facilities where migrant workers are oriented and information is provided on human smuggling and trafficking. The closest reference was made in 2010, when the proposal of the South American Plan for the Human Development of Migration was presented (OIM, 2010), where it was established that, between 2011 and 2020, the action plan would be developed, emphasizing the application of human rights in migration.

Regarding *control and security*, Argentina has a *strong* regionalism indicator (1), which means it is committed to border management under common rules and operational cooperation. Uruguay has a *weak* indicator (0.41), which implies an exchange of good practices in immigration control systems. In this respect, people interviewed in Argentina said:

Reciprocal recognition of competencies is a modality that seeks to perform migration control only once through the delegation of powers. This implies harmonizing the information systems [...] in this way, we are reducing half of the officials or duplicating the attention to migrants (CSO, personal communication, October 29, 2019).

From another perspective, NGOs criticize the actions of migration process managers at borders:

Most of the Argentine borders have integrated controls. This implies that all controls are shared. Entry into the territory is not complex, but the application for international protection-asylum is. Migration operators avoid it because it requires more time and arrangements. Immigrants usually enter as tourists, and only when they arrive in capital cities are their asylum applications received. The problem is often the discretion of the public official. There is a big gap between the law and its enforcement. In addition, no border law requires a different regulation according to the particular dynamics (CSO, personal communication, November 2, 2019).

Regarding this same approach, Uruguayan interviewees expressed, “The control and security in Uruguay emphasizes the human rights of immigrants, without neglecting the security issue” (IGO, personal communication, November 5, 2019). It was also stated that

There are a few policies, but rather than functioning as coordination policies within Mercosur, they are agreements signed bilaterally between countries that are part of this agreement. On the other hand, protocols and good practices are also coming on the scene through agencies such as UNHCR and IOM (GO, personal communication, November 8, 2019).

Through the interviews, it is confirmed that both Argentina and Uruguay are making a great effort not to subordinate control and security to human rights. However, the regulations had a turning point in January 2017, when President Mauricio Macri sanctioned decree 70/2017, which restricted the rights of the migrant population achieved through Law 25871 (as cited in Gandini et al., 2019) and facilitated the conditions for the expulsion of immigrants on the grounds of insecurity. On the other hand, the Decree 138 of 2021 repealed decree 70/2017, as it was considered irreconcilable with the Constitution of the Argentine Nation by moving away from protecting human rights.

Concerning expulsions from the country, people interviewed stated that when expulsions occur, it is because people have committed crimes or remain irregularly in the country. Although they have been urged to regularize their status, they have not. At the same time, controls have been intensified with the Venezuelan migratory process. UNHCR, IOM, and the Red Cross are providing support to respond to the current mobility issue, mainly at the border. In Uruguay, there is a stratification of rights among migrants, hence why it is necessary to unify them. For example, Venezuelans have significantly benefited, while migrants such as Cubans have not been as fortunate because their country does not belong to Mercosur.

Regarding this same approach, in Colombia and Peru, *migration control and security* are based on protecting human rights. This indicator value is 0.73 for Colombia, placing it in a *partial* regime, which implies border management with common rules. Peru obtained an indicator of 0.83, which puts it in a *strong* regime, reflecting border management with common rules and operational cooperation. In this respect, the interviewees expressed:

Colombia is not applying the Mercosur Residence Agreement to Venezuelan citizens. Still, it is applying a more flexible migratory regulation since the migratory regulation is given to control normal migration flows, and with the exodus that this community is experiencing, there are defined mandatory entries and exits from the country through places established by a resolution (maritime, river, land, air), and there are grounds for non-admission, decree 1067/2015, and seeks alternatives for orderly and safe migration. This is a circumstantial process because there was already a policy in place. It is necessary to analyze the crisis through the different stages (GO, personal communication, August 12, 2019).

CSOs converged on the following opinions: “Migration control policies and practices at the borders are discretionary” (CSO, personal communication, September 16, 2019). They also stated,

“The requirements requested at the border are too flexible, which is why all sorts of people enter. This has been damaging to us and has turned Peruvian society against us” (CSO, personal communication, September 16, 2019).

Moreover, *migration control and security* around the immigration process of Venezuelans to Colombia and Peru is managed from a human rights and national regulation and ad hoc legal instruments perspective, but there is no regulatory convergence between these two countries, nor with the states that signed the Mercosur Residence Agreement; there is no supervision nor review mechanisms according to the Mercosur integration agreement (Sacristán-Rodríguez & Llanez Anaya, 2022). These two countries have unilaterally presented some of their decisions and have expressed themselves on a subregional basis through the Lima Group and the Quito Process (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019), in both of which the member countries expressed their displeasure at Nicolás Maduro’s government, and then focused on the migration issue. The 2018 Quito Declaration on human mobility of Venezuelan citizens in the region highlights the 18-point approach through which it intends to take actions that respond to the needs of Venezuelan citizens, exchange information, and seek funding sources for the countries most impacted by this migration. It should be noted that these declarations are not binding (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019).

To date, decisions have been made unilaterally by these two states, which has set off reactions in all other countries in the region. The decisions made in Chile, Peru, and Ecuador have provoked an intense movement of Venezuelan migrants to Colombia, which has overwhelmed the capacity of this country in all instances and even more so in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding the degree of *legalization and institutionalization*, none of the countries studied has fully complied with the regional migration commitments established through Mercosur’s intergovernmental institutions. However, Argentina has the best performance in the region, as shown by the different interviews conducted. For Uruguay, this is its weakest indicator, which implies soft legislative coordination with little or no monitoring. Argentina presents a *strong* indicator (1) with international law commitments and judicial and political review mechanisms. On the other hand, this indicator lags far behind in Colombia (0.11), with a *weak* level of legalization and the absence of independent monitoring bodies adequate to enforce the law. This can be explained by the fragile level of legalization, with minimal internal coordination (Lavenex, 2019). Finally, Peru ranks on a *partial* scale (0.55) and is slightly more developed than Colombia in international law commitments, although without supervision and review mechanisms.

The massive movement of Venezuelan migrants through the region in such a short period overwhelmed the logistical and institutional capacities of the countries of destination of this population. To this must be added the weak level of legalization and internal coordination of these countries and the absence of an intraregional coercive body to guarantee the adoption and application of the agreements reached; nor is there an independent supranational legal body, resulting in an irregular implementation of regulations (Acosta Arcarazo & Geddes, 2014; Lavenex, 2019).

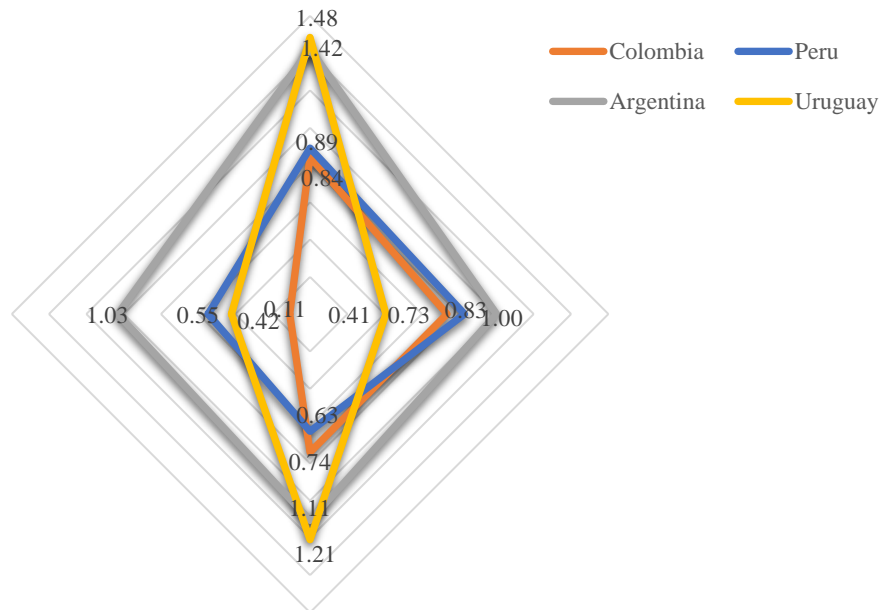
The SACM seems to have a merely declarative function, promoting a positive vision of migration. Still, it has a weak institutional structure with low convening capacity, which limits its normative potential regarding migration management and security issues. It is feasible to strengthen this structure through the convergence and harmonization of agreements in migration by merging the issue of South American citizenship that the UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) has been working on together with the upcoming legal developments to be implemented by the ARM (Harns, 2013).

Table 3. Indicator of the Regional Taxonomy of Migration Governance of Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and Uruguay in the Mercosur Agreement

Factor	Argentina		Uruguay		Peru		Colombia	
	Indicator by factor	Level of regionalism	Indicator by factor	Level of regionalism	Indicator by factor	Level of regionalism	Indicator by factor	Level of regionalism
Economic mobility	1.42	Very strong	1.48	Very strong	0.89	Strong	0.84	Strong
Migration control and security	1	Stong	0.14	Weak	0.83	Partial	0.73	Partial
Human rights	1.11	Very strong	1.21	Very strong	0.63	Partial	0.74	Partial
Legalization and institutionalization	1.03	Very strong	0.42	Weak	0.55	Partial	0.11	Weak
General indicator	1.14	Very strong	0.88	Strong	0.72	Partial	0.61	Partial

Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 1. Taxonomy of Regional Migratory Governance of Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia, and Peru in Mercosur.



Source: Own elaboration.



## CONCLUSIONS

As can be inferred from the analysis in Table 3, various degrees of regionalism can be observed, in which Argentina shows a *very strong* level, Uruguay shows a *strong* level, and Colombia and Peru show *partial* regionalism.

Although Colombia and Peru embraced the ARM, their level of regionalism is due to the fact that this agreement was not implemented until August 5, 2017, when Mercosur suspended Venezuela. The current migration policies that both states apply to the increasing Venezuelan migratory flows are discretionary and, in Colombia's case, for reasons of reciprocity. Without establishing an effective GRM with robust supranational institutions and regulations, Colombia and Peru have opted to apply ad hoc national policies that allow them to respond to the migratory phenomenon without necessarily converging but rather in line with the interests of the government in power.

This circumstance is evident through the measures adopted by the Peruvian government in 2019, which established restrictions on entry to the country for people who did not have a humanitarian visa or passport (National Superintendence of Migration of Peru, 2019). On January 26, 2021, the government mobilized army units to the border with Ecuador to control the entry of undocumented Venezuelan immigrants. This event shows Peru's interest in securing its borders with a migration control mechanism. Colombia, for its part, presented the Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants under the Temporary Protection Regime (decree 216/2021), which implies a commitment to protect the human rights of immigrants residing in the country irregularly. Similarly, the Statute seeks to manage the flows of the Venezuelan population in the long term more effectively and efficiently, update the information systems to propose public policies following the new requirements, and register and promote the benefits of migration in the country and the region.

As can be seen in Figure 1, in this research demonstrates the hypothesis that the migration policy established in the Mercosur integration process and applied by the associated countries has remained fragmented and differentiated. The lack of internalization of the agreements by countries such as Colombia and Peru shows the existing misalignment between global and supranational problems and national objectives. This inability to offer regional solutions can be seen in the Venezuelan migration process through the sub-region. Argentina and Uruguay, on the other hand, have internalized the ARM more comprehensively. The findings of the fieldwork and the bibliometric review reveal that in the GRM of these two countries, there is an overlapping regionalism where the existing migration policies in the ARM are applied to the Venezuelan migratory movement without the two nations having the same level of development in the four indicators presented in this study.

Given that a differentiated and fragmented migration regime with a deficit in coordination and harmonization among the ARM-associated countries is evident, it is essential to make the signed migration agreements binding. This point implies the creation of an intraregional body to monitor

compliance with the commitments made (Acosta Arcarazo & Geddes, 2014) and any institutional adjustments that may be necessary.

The narrative on migration governance in the studied region has been highly consensual and legitimized by the international community, which comprises the different agencies of the United Nations and the various sectors of civil society that have established the tendency to manage migration issues in non-binding consultative bodies. Despite their non-contentious nature, the resolutions of these forums influence national and regional migration policies with orientations that serve the interests of the developed countries receiving migrants, which do not recognize the discourses or the diverse scenarios that motivate migratory flows in this region or the politicization of migration (Domenech, 2013), which facilitates the analysis of the relationship between categories such as migrations, state, and citizenship, a perspective that diverges from the dominant hermeneutics and the concept of formal citizenship that proposes to consider migrants as citizens who carry out and maintain practices of equality and freedom (Domenech, 2008).

Translation: Bárbara Ramírez de Valdez.

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