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Wall of visas: how race impacts the externalization of (forced) migration control in south-south migration corridors

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ABSTRACT
Externalization happens when countries "extend" their borders beyond their territorial limits. While existing literature on it focuses on the "Global North", similar practices in the "Global South" are understudied and implemented differently, with a greater use of visas as a hidden type of externalization strategy. Little is known on whether these practices are racially determined. We partly fill this gap; focusing on Brazil, we demonstrate how it uses humanitarian visas for Haitians and family reunification visas for Sub-Saharan African refugees as an externalization strategy to control the (forced) migration of black forced migrants to Brazil. We draw from thematic analysis of legislation, minutes from official meetings, interviews with stakeholders and diplomatic archival research. We show that, despite its "liberal" migration policy, Brazil's visa policies instead function as a hidden externalization strategy, operating as a metaphorical "racial wall of visas", keeping mainly black (forced) migrants out, preventing them from receiving protection.

Introduction

In 2018, Koffi[1] invited his parents to his graduation in Brazil. His parents needed a tourist visa, to which they applied in the Brazilian embassy in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Despite all documents showing their links to the DRC and a letter from the Dean of their son's University, they were told their visa was denied because "they were likely going to apply for asylum once they arrived in Brazil", due to ongoing political unrest in Kinshasa. Interestingly, the Brazilian National Committee for Refugees (henceforth CONARE) had historically rejected asylum applications by Congolese people who had left Kinshasa considering it a safe place (Cintra 2022; CONARE 2015). At the same time, many Congolese refugees were separated from their families because Brazilian diplomats in Kinshasa denied their family reunification visas (Martuscelli 2019)

These cases illustrate how Brazil uses visas to prevent or restrict the entry of some migrants, and as we show in this paper, overwhelmingly those racialized as black.

Although she did not fully develop it, Harrell-Bond (2013) reflected that states construct "visa-walls" to prevent unwanted migration, a concept further advanced by Cintra (2022). We build on our previous work to explain how Brazil employs visas as a hidden externalization practice, creating a racial wall of visas which mainly affected Haitian forced migrants and Congolese refugees and their family members.

Visas are part of a much broader and generalized practice of offshoring mobility control to reduce the arrival of those deemed the least desirable migrants. Border control externalization has been mostly analysed in South–North movements, as countries in the "Global North" try to contain (irregular) movements of (racialized) people from the "Global South" (Hyndman and Mountz 2008; Moreno-Lax and Lemberg-Pedersen 2019). Geopolitical rather than geographical, this dynamic exists in a context wherein such movements reflect the continuous relationship of economic and political dependency created in colonialism and compounded in postcolonial times resulting from neocolonial and imperialist practices (Lemberg-Pedersen 2019). Since countries (and their peoples) are by-products of centuries of colonial exploitation, South–North movements, in some of these cases, are not only unavoidable, but a reflection of decolonisation where borders themselves operate under racial lines (Achiume 2021; 2022).

Externalization largely operates as part of broader goals to securitize border control, that is, transform migration and migrants into a security threat to the state as an added mechanism to contain such movements. Although securitization involves mechanisms such as the strengthening of border police, militarization of border controls, creation of checkpoints beyond territorial borders, criminalization of human rights activists, amongst others, it also operates through extraterritorial activities in sending and transit countries as a way to contain unwanted movements from reaching the Global North. This outward expansion of borders (Moreno-Lax and Lemberg-Pedersen 2019) is perhaps most commonly seen in bilateral agreements between destinations in the Global North and countries in the Global South, as was the case of agreements between Turkey, Libya and the European Union (EU), Mexico and Guatemala and the United States (US), or between Malaysia and Indonesia and Australia to contain irregular and unwanted movements of (racialized) people (Biorklund Belliveau and Ferguson 2023; Lee 2022; Strange and Martins 2019).

Nonetheless, we also observe externalized border securitization in the Global South, such as in Latin America (Freier 2013; Riggirozzi et al. 2023; Zapata et al. 2023), Asia (Lee 2022) and Africa (Opi 2024). Recent studies on externalization in the Global South focus more on the impacts of and resistance to Global North externalization policies in Global South countries (Lee 2022; Opi 2024). However, a more in-depth analysis of how Global South countries use externalization to control South-South movements is nonetheless still missing from this literature.

This paper addresses three main gaps. First, the literature mostly focuses on highly visible or "spectacular" externalization (De Genova 2015), such as bilateral agreements between the Global North and third countries in the Global South (Hyndman and Mountz 2008; Menjívar 2014), leaving more subtle extraterritorial border controls, such as visa policies, integrally out of their analysis or given a more secondary role (Laube 2019). In many ways, the need for visas is one of the first challenges migrants face in their decision to leave their countries (Freier 2013; Laube 2019). As Mau et al. (2015) showed, visas have become a scarce resource for some populations (especially African

nationals), demonstrating a "global mobility divide". The way visas are applied differ from "spectacle" forms of externalization, as they are more easily hidden in structural migratory control frameworks as well as in everyday procedures, which makes them an overlooked externalization strategy.

Second, the externalization literature is overly focused on South–North movements, generally overlooking the many ways Global South countries outward its border controls. While it is known that most forced migrants concentrate in the Global South (UNHCR 2024), this "Global South" is not homogenous or uniform, nor is it equally open or receptive to (forced) migrants, and therefore may also apply several measures to deter and contain (some) movements in a variety of ways. And finally, part of the literature on externalization may fail to recognize the Global South as racially heterogeneous, wherein specific racial hierarchies impact the governance of (unwanted) movements and border regimes. We agree with Klotz (2023) that Latin American settler states, such as Brazil, have not received sufficient attention in regard to the colonial legacies of its migration policies.

We address these gaps by analysing the Brazilian case. While portraying itself as a progressive country via its humanitarian visa scheme, Brazil has conversely slowed down and contained the movements of black forced migrants mostly, as this did not happen to other (non-black) beneficiaries of similar policies. The country has done so through the externalization of its border control via hidden strategies, namely the use of visas. This in turn allowed the country to keep an apparent racial neutrality and progressiveness in its migration management strategies and policies while concurrently its end result was racialized border control.

We analyse it in three ways. First, by reviewing and contributing to what the literature in externalization says about visas as an everyday outsourcing strategy, as well as about how race impacts outward border control. Second, we explain why focusing on Brazil helps to understand externalization in South-South corridors, and how it contributes to the broader debates on extraterritorial border control. We then move on to the analysis of two specific cases, that of Haitians seeking protection and of Sub-Saharan Africans aiming to reunite with their families. In order to do so, we conducted a thematic and critical discourse analysis of Brazilian documents – legislation and minutes of CONARE and the Immigration Council (CNIg) between 1997 and 2018 related to both issues; semi-structured key-informant interviews with Brazilian authorities and organizations involved in migration policies conducted in 2018, and diplomatic correspondence from 2013 to 2018 collected as part of an archival research at the Minister for Foreign Affairs (MRE) in Brasília in 2018; and an ethnography of asylum decisions from 2017 to 2019. Most of the fieldwork was conducted in our previous institutions, i.e. Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro and University of São Paulo. Further reflections on the methodology and ethics of the projects that underscore this paper are available in Cintra (2022; 2023) and Martuscelli (2019; 2023), also demonstrating the authors' compliance with local Brazilian institution's ethical guidelines. Furthermore, Cintra has developed this work further, and has obtained ethical approval from her current institution[2]. We analyse how the country governed migration through humanitarian discourses and mechanisms, most notably humanitarian and family reunification visas, with the effect of creating a racial wall of visas that impeded and prevented racial Others to enter the country, claim asylum and reunite with their families.

White nations, unequal visa regimes: hidden externalization through racialized visa policies

Visas are a powerful measure states have to manage and control migrants. Overstaying transit and tourist visas is one of the main reasons for migrant irregularity and a way in which many people in need of protection have access to a territory to apply for asylum (Fitzgerald 2019; Infantino 2019; Mau et al. 2015; Scheel 2019). Family visas reinforce gendered, heteronormative norms, where Western views of romantic love are employed as a control technology to select which families and couples are allowed to enter and stay, and which should stay away (Satzewich 2014; Scheel and Gutekunst 2019). Visas are therefore one of the main deterrence strategies applied by countries in order to keep the "undesirables" out (Fitzgerald 2019). Mau et al. (2015) have reflected how, on average, citizens from OECD countries have progressively increased their mobility, as less visas are requested of them to travel. African citizens need more visas today than 25 years ago, demonstrating the intensification of the global mobility divide, as well as how the governance of mobility is increasingly based on a hierarchy of (un)desirability of migrants, that is, who is allowed in, and who should stay out.

While visas can be clearly used as deterrence strategies, in many cases they are not as commonly seen or analysed as a measure of externalization of border control, with a few exceptions (see Laube 2019; or framed as remote control in Fitzgerald 2019). As mentioned by Crisp (2019), externalization refers to "measures taken by states in locations beyond their territorial borders to obstruct, deter or otherwise avert the arrival of refugees". Externalization therefore implies two essential elements, the first one territorial, and the second, related to its effects. For some measure to be defined under the externalization remit, it must happen *beyond the territorial borders of a country*. This is why visas are sometimes left out of externalization debates, as their issuing sometimes happens in consular posts abroad, misconceived as an extension of the territorial borders of a country. Indeed, although they benefit from the inviolability of its premises, as per Article 31 of the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, it does not mean it is sovereign land. As such, the territorial requirement of externalization is present; visas issued by consular posts abroad are for all intents and purposes done so *beyond the territorial borders of a country*. But this is not enough to make it a border externalization measure. In order to accomplish that, its effects must be the obstruction, deterrence or otherwise aversion of the arrival of migrants and refugees to a country's territorial borders. We highlight that this happens regardless of *overt intention,* demonstrating that what matters is the effect it causes.

A country therefore does not need to create agreements with third countries to keep unwanted migrants out, since externalization measures are not just the highly visible spectacle policies (De Genova 2015). The simple act of requiring visas, with more or less strict requirements, is enough to filter out unwanted migrants. As mentioned by Mau et al. (2015, 1194), "the underlying idea of requiring people to have a visa before entering a country is clearly one of "remote control" (…) or "pre-emptive mobility governance" (…)". However, differently to the abovementioned "spectacular" externalization measures, visas are a *procedural* or a *bureaucratic externalization* measure. Either applied on its own or combined with other measures, externalization through visa controls brings some advantages to its implementing state, given it is seen as a normalized

everyday state practice, and is not as commonly subject to external oversight. Border externalization through visas is therefore a less overt, "hidden" measure, which states routinely implement.

Visa policies are, by definition, restrictive and discriminate against those who can enter a territory (and in which conditions) and those who cannot (Freier 2013). Besides that, several determinants, such as class and gender, can impact their accessibility and affordability which can be subsequently used to more subtly filter undesirable newcomers and deepen the mobility divide in intersectional ways (Recchi et al. 2021). In some cases, countries may establish a limited number of visas per period for certain nationalities, which demonstrates its (unequal) effects and the country's strategy to leave the migrants (and nationalities) they consider unwanted, out (Obinna 2020), regardless of an overt or public display of intentions. Relatedly, another common practice involves the use of time as a deterrent, with the implementation of long waiting periods, either to enable an application, or to get a result. This may happen even in visas with facilitated conditions, such as a reduced documentation threshold, mainly affecting those who cannot afford the wait, particularly for safety reasons, such as people fleeing persecution or violent and insecure situations.

Considering the majority of countries whose citizens need a visa, combined with other eligibility requirements such as high fees and waiting times, race and class can together be relevant frameworks to understand which migrants are the most undesirable and the somewhat hidden racialized structures that underpin migration management through visa policies. Although we say "hidden", this refers to the ways in which these policies are structured, i.e. seemingly racially (and class) neutral, but their racialized effects and consequences are very much overt. They are also hidden because they happen in the everyday practices (Côté-Boucher, Infantino, and Salter 2014) of street-level bureaucrats, such as diplomats (Alpes and Spire 2014).

While class is present in some of the literature about global visa regimes, race has been somewhat missing. Mau et al. (2015), for instance, mainly address how citizens from "rich" countries have increasingly had more "mobility rights" whereas citizens from "poor" countries, not least in Africa, have had these rights stagnated or diminished. A racial analysis has been thoroughly absent, even if such divides demonstrate the unspoken pact of former colonial and current imperial powers that guarantee mobility rights for its citizens, whilst former colonized peoples lack similar rights (Achiume 2021; 2022). Indeed, we rely on Rosenberg's (2022) thorough study on the increase in global migration (racial) bias since 1960 even if migration policies since then are racially neutral. Such a postcolonial mobility divide demonstrates the intricacies of ideas of race and nation in which citizens of "white" countries have more mobility rights in comparison to citizens of "non-white", but mainly "black", States.

Here, despite the apparent equivalence of race and nation, we aim to highlight how we represent both as "suitable companions" (Da Silva 2007), rather than interchangeable concepts. Similarly, Rosenberg (2022) highlights how race is highly correlated with other variables, such as income (or rather, class) and geography (or rather, nation). In this sense, we refer to the construction of the *national* and the *nation* in European and white settler countries as embedded in Eurocentric discourse and white supremacy; indeed, we analyse eurocentrism and whiteness as mutually reinforcing mechanisms. As such, when referencing a country as a "white" country, it primarily entails the development

of their national identity along racial lines. This is not only the case of European countries (Jugé and Perez 2006), but equally its white settler colonies, such as the United States, Australia and several Latin American countries.

A direct consequence of this dynamic, in which the racial and the national are mutually reinforced, is the emergence of several processes of bordering, something which is salient in strategies that want to protect the "West" from its Others. In other words, "racial disparities enforced by national borders structurally benefit some nations and racial groups at the expense of others" (Achiume 2022, 449). Visa policies are crucial in these processes. Material, political and symbolic "walls" "delimit a fantasy of bounded whiteness as the preserver of Western civilization while reproducing imperial imaginaries of unbounded privilege" (Stümer 2019, 302). The national space, and its white centred project, is therefore protected through several measures, including a "wall of visas" (Cintra 2022), which keeps its racial unwanted Others out. While such "walls" can be seen as "closer to home", i.e. attached to the territorial borders of a national space, any strategies that aim to create spaces of distance, are equally bordering strategies. It is therefore unsurprising that whiteness is a "passport of privilege", giving one more "capacity to move across borders" (Andrucki 2010), while at the same time, one's relative distance to whiteness determines one's greater incapacity for mobility (or greater immobility).

We then agree with Achiume (2022) when she states that national borders are a "racial technology", and focus in these racialized bordering externalization schemes away from the territorial national borders, with a particular focus on visa policies. Freedom of movement as visa exemptions are therefore a *continuum* of a white-supremacist global divide. Although this may seem particularly relevant in South–North movements, racial analysis of visa policies and externalization in the Global South remain lacking, even if the literature demonstrates the widespread use of visas in the Global South, particularly in Latin America. Ecuador, for instance, adopted visas to prevent the arrival of African and Asian nationals in 2010 (Freier 2013). Peru and Ecuador created humanitarian visas to prevent the entry of Venezuelan migrants in their territories (Freier and Luzes 2021). While these studies reflected on visa policies, they do not discuss the role of race. Freier (2013, 2) briefly reflected on the "overt negative ethnic selectivity […] in the field of visa policies", but we still need further studies connecting race and externalization practices in the region.

In the session below, we bridge that gap by analysing the case of Brazil, and how the country's specific racial hierarchies have historically impacted, and still do, migration to Brazil through visa policies.

Brazil, a country of appearances: hidden externalization, apparent racial neutrality

Racially determined externalization policies may more overtly appear in South–North movements, particularly due to the colonial legacies that connect former colonial powers and colonized peoples, and corresponding racial cleavages that underpin the dynamics between them. This is also due to how the Global South is normally portrayed as a homogenous block of countries, opposed to the "White Global North". This overshadows the development of national (and racial) identities in postcolonial nation-states, including Brazil.

Brazil is relevant because even if it is a "Global South" country, the postcolonial formation of the "Brazilian nation" is tied to white-supremacist ideas. Much of how the country's white elites historically acted on its goals to create a "white nation" was through the implementation of racialized migration policies (Cintra 2022). Brazilian white elites did it in a "hidden" way, while in parallel strengthening a foundational national myth, that of Brazil as a "racial democracy". The discursive celebration of racial mixture in the country (between white European migrants, Indigenous and African populations), or *mestiçagem,* underpins the creation of said myth, as it pinpointed to a country which had apparently overcome racial differences. However, racial mixture itself was founded on white-supremacy, which allowed Brazil to develop different forms of racialization that, coupled with the lack of segregation in law, hid racism under a discursive layer of an apparent post racial society. Racism, the Brazilian way. This essentially means how racism in the country hides itself away in its social-political and economic structures and is seen in both intentional or unintentional actions and policies which produce and/or compound unequal consequences to different (racial) groups (Almeida 2018). How this myth and the country's migration policies develop thereafter demonstrate a continuum of *praxis of secrets* which act as a function of coloniality via "hidden" strategies – such as visas, and (racialized) externalization measures.

After independence, postcolonial Nation-States had a clear challenge of forming a singular national identity. In Brazil, one of the main issues to tackle, according to white elites, was the racial formation of its population. Having been the country which imported more enslaved Africans than any other in the world, and the last in the Americas to abolish slavery, in 1888, Brazilian elites feared both the country's dependence on slave labour and the great numbers of black and mixed people in the country, as they wanted Brazil to be a "white nation". According to Nascimento (1978), in 1822, more than half of the Brazilian population was formed of non-white, and mostly black people, which elicited debates and policies to address the racial formation of the newly independent Brazilian Nation State.

This directly impacted migratory and settlement policies, particularly towards and after the abolition of slavery, used to populate, "civilise" and modernize areas occupied by indigenous peoples, and substitute local (black, mixed and indigenous) labour, as they were considered "racially inferior and unable to effectively produce […] in a capitalist economy" (Seyferth 2000, 145). Brazil wanted to become a competitive capitalist country, and racial concerns were central to achieving that. While migratory policies were more overtly justified due to labour needs and land occupation, part of the reason why white Europeans and US citizens were preferred immigrants were directly related to concerns with the racial future of the country. At the time, the Brazilian elite believed in "the eugenic proposition that a single "national race" was biologically possible (…) [by] the support of policies to promote the entry of "desirable" immigrants who would "whiten" the country" (Lesser 1999, 04). A *racially-based desirability spectrum* (Cintra 2022) emerged as a result, with "whiteness" and "blackness" in its two opposing poles.

Proximity to "whiteness" or "blackness" placed migrants in a different position in the desirability spectrum. How it was applied, though, was of particular interest. Lesser (1999, 147) asserted that, historically, in the governance of migration, "secret policies were more important than official ones". This explains how racial concerns existed, albeit not overtly racialized policies. Seyferth (2002) demonstrates how white-supremacy

was mainly seen in official meetings, not in laws and decrees. Even in these cases, race was sometimes hidden from policies and debates via the use of nationality-based preferences, and, as Klotz (2023) claims, class-based restrictions often served as proxies for racism. For instance, debates did not necessarily mention the undesirability of non-white people, but they did list the preferred nationalities and migrants' professions (Seyferth 2000).

Parallel to this was the creation of a foundational myth of Brazil as a "racial democracy". Seyferth (2000) states how the *mestiço* emerges both as a problem (as the goal is to create a white nation) and solution (because it was via *mestiçagem* that whitening should be achieved). Despite this being portrayed as a positive feature of the Brazilian nation, *racial fusion* via *mestiçagem* had a goal "to whiten [the nation] or [make the non-whites] disappear" (Pires 2018, 11).

As such, Brazil is an interesting case in which, historically, racist policies were hidden under the guise of a progressive migration framework and foundational myth. Racism itself was the *praxis of secrets*. While historians have analysed these practices mainly until the mid-twentieth century, we question whether this *modus operandi* stopped then, particularly considering the overarching grammar for migration policies no longer uses overtly racist justifications, even if states still want to restrict undesirable migrants (Rosenberg 2022). We claim it has not. As we will analyse below, we demonstrate how Brazil continues to use overtly progressive (now framed as humanitarian) and racially neutral migration frameworks which paradoxically produce unequal racialized effects, particularly (and negatively) impacting non-white, but mostly black, migrants.

The Brazilian experience of racial wall of visas as a hidden externalization strategy

This section shows how Brazil implemented two different hidden externalization strategies that limited the arrival of black forced migrants:(1) humanitarian visas for Haitians structurally created as a hidden externalization strategy to slow-down their movement and prevent them from claiming asylum; and (2) family reunification policies for refugees that allowed diplomats abroad to prevent the arrival of (black) relatives of African (especially DRC) refugees through their everyday activities in visa decision-making. Both visa policies have a hidden racial externalization component whose effects create what we call a racial wall of visas.

Keeping Haitians out: humanitarian visas as externalized border control?

Brazil has a recent important history with Haiti. As the military commander of MINUSTAH, the United Nations Mission to Stabilize Haiti, Brazilian military and police personnel directly conducted operations with the Haitian civilian population from 2004 until 2017. The Brazilian presence in Haiti for so many years, alongside a parallel economic boost in Brazil, and the increasing difficulties in more traditionally migratory corridors (namely to the United States), put Brazil on the map as a possible destination for Haitians (Joseph 2015). This became a reality after Haiti was massively destroyed by an earthquake in January 2010, which aggravated its political and economic crisis.

From 2010-2017, Haitians were the main asylum seekers in Brazil (Cintra 2022), with numbers reaching the figure of 65,000 at the end of 2015 (Fernandes and Faria 2017).

Their displacement normally started in Haiti or the Dominican Republic. They came to South America via Ecuador, which then had an "open visa" policy, crossed Peru until they reached the border with the Brazilian state of Acre, one of the poorest in the country, where they applied for asylum, since no other regularization routes were available. Emergency support was needed to local services, since the growing numbers of Haitians overwhelmed the local capacity – and triggered a need for a quick administrative response. Despite the ever-growing numbers of asylum applications, Haitians were not recognized as refugees.

In 2011, the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) met in order to consider how to manage the growing numbers of Haitians entering the country and applying for asylum. Three courses of action were considered. The first one was collective deportation, which, despite seriously considering it, was formally abandoned due to reported "humanitarian responsibility" to Haitians and illegality of collective deportations. Brazil's responsibility in the MINUSTAH was also mentioned as something that would morally prevent their deportation as it would seem a paradoxical attitude. Secondly, they considered whether to collectively recognize Haitians as refugees. Despite their acknowledgement of the volatile and violent circumstances in Haiti, the Committee overwhelmingly disagreed with the recognition of Haitians as refugees. The reason? There was an overall fear that recognizing Haitians as refugees could mean an incentive to their displacement to Brazil and an increase in their land border arrivals, precisely what they wanted to prevent. Finally, the committee opted for the collective refusal of their asylum claims and the forwarding of their cases to the country's Immigration Council (CNIg), to give Haitians an exceptional type of permit (Cintra 2021).

The bureaucratic transfer from an administrative body responsible for *refugees* to one responsible for *labour migration* was a clear message from the Brazilian government about how they would govern Haitian mobility. Their answer, a temporary one, was *reactive* to the recent land border arrivals and aimed at solving what they thought would be a temporary influx. Creating a provisional response under an economic framework could meet the main governmental needs at that time, i.e. solve migrant irregularity, and portray a positive international outlook, mainly considering Brazil's role in the MINUSTAH, whilst not creating any commitments under any framework of rights. The initial administrative response within CNIg therefore reflected these goals. The continuing land border arrivals, followed by refused asylum applications and the transfer to CNIg however created inter-administrative tensions and demonstrated the undesirability of Haitian arrivals from the perspective of the federal government. In 2013, for instance, one of CNIg's members mentioned how measures concerning Haitians should henceforth be of a restrictive nature, since Brazil had already accomplished its "humanitarian role" and should now prevent "problematic" land border crossings from becoming a "habit" (CNIg 2013).

One of the solutions Brazil created to prevent further land border crossings – while at the same time not damaging its international "humanitarian" stance – was to create *humanitarian visas*. They were *ad hoc* nationality-based visas, non-existent before and created from scratch to solve the "Haitian problem". As a way to regulate the undocumented flux, CNIg published Resolution n. 97/2012, the first of its kind, creating visas to Haitians aiming to come to Brazil. Visas should only be issued in the Brazilian embassy in Port-au-Prince (Haiti) and had annual limits – 1,200 per year only. In 2012, CNIg members established this limit "in order to ensure that the concession of humanitarian visas

should not promote a Haitian Diaspora [in Brazil]", and recognized that economic precarity in Haiti would already be a limiting factor for accessing this visa, given the charged fees. This demonstrated that CNIg used this framework to limit Haitian migration, both their land crossings and via limiting visas as well as with the creation of certain class-based financial requirements (CNIG 2012).

In parallel to this novelty, the country also created a similar, *ad hoc* measure to another major group of asylum seekers in Brazil at that time, i.e. Syrians. No other similar group benefitted from such policies until years later, in the context of the new Migration Law in 2017. In 2013, CONARE issued Normative Resolution n° 17 (RN17), which created the first and only ever visa allowing a group to safely arrive in Brazil to claim asylum, with facilitated visa procedures and no quotas. As such, Haitians were issued a visa to *prevent* their asylum applications and to limit their arrivals, they were quickly and collectively *denied* asylum, with no individual analysis, while Syrians were quickly *given* asylum. In fact, the institutional response to Syrians fell under the administrative body responsible for *refugees*. A clear dyad of (un)desirability can thus be seen in the management of both groups. As we will further analyse below, Syrians saw themselves as white in Brazil – and Brazil itself perceived them as a familiar group. The RN17's preamble, justifying this visa's creation, recognized "the historical bonds between Syria and Brazil, where there is a considerable population with Syrian ancestry". This highlights the ethnic-racial underpinnings of decisions relating to visas, even humanitarian ones, and the hidden racial component of these policies, neutralized with uses of nationality-based decisions, further reflecting the race-nation dyad and their interrelatedness.

Despite its attempts at creating a humanitarian visa to offshore the control of Haitian arrivals, CNIg was unsuccessful. By February 2012, only 30 per cent of the monthly quota of visas were granted; bureaucratic demands including valid passport, proof of residence in Haiti, certificate of no criminal records and a visa fee of US$200 made it hard for many Haitians to access the visa (Fernandes and Faria 2017). Moreover, many had already left Haiti before having the chance to apply for a visa – and were initially denied entry upon attempting to cross the Peruvian-Brazilian border (Thomaz 2013). Visa numbers soon became insufficient, though, and many who could not get an appointment continued their journey by land. According to Fernandes and Faria (2017), waiting times for a visa appointment would surpass a year. Even after eliminating the visa quotas in 2013, the consular posts' capacity to process visas did not meet the demands which created long queues and waiting times and therefore did not fully prevent land border crossings. As such, Haitians entered Brazil via two main routes: land crossing (without visas, which the country wanted to halt) and through the issuing of visas and direct travel (which the country wanted to allow on a limited basis and have more control over numbers and who could access it).

Indeed, Brazil never stopped trying to prevent Haitians land arrivals; parallel to CNIg's attempts, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE) implemented a border diplomacy campaign, pushing Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador to adopt restrictive measures so that Brazil could create a "wall of visas" surrounding itself (Cintra 2022). Peru quickly responded to Brazil's pressures and started to require visas to Haitians upon entry in 2012 (Trabalón 2018). Ecuador, however, had an "open visa policy" until 2015. The lifting of this policy and success in Brazil's border diplomacy strategies "cemented" the metaphorical "wall of visas" and was the most successful way to prevent land arrivals. This was demonstrated

in the reduced numbers of asylum applications by Haitians; whereas in 2015, more than 14,000 Haitians applied for asylum, these numbers fell to 646 in 2016 (CONARE 2017).

Brazil not only created a humanitarian visa as a way to prevent the spontaneous land arrivals and asylum applications by Haitians, but it also used it as a way to control and restrict the numbers of Haitian migrants altogether. While humanitarian visas were widely praised internally and internationally, its reactive, temporary and nationality-based nature, on top of its limitations and high documentational threshold, showcased its restrictive access. When comparing to other existing and similar measures at the time, it also reflected racialized consequences. When considering the treatment given to other (white) forced migrants arriving in the country at the time (most notably Syrians), it demonstrated the *continuum* of a racial (un)desirability spectrum, particularly against the (forced) migration of Black individuals to Brazil. While the analysis of official meetings that underscored Brazilian measures to Haitians and Syrians can pinpoint to some *intentional* worries about racialization – such as the mention of the will to prevent the creation of a Haitian Diaspora, or the creation of visas to Syrians because they are recognized as part of the Brazilian (racialized) migration history – we instead focus on their effects to both groups comparatively, regardless of intention, since this is how structural racism in the country has historically developed. In this case, regardless of intention, Haitians were prevented access to asylum and had their access to the Brazilian territory either halted or limited with the creation of a humanitarian visa. Following its historic *modus operandi,* Brazil did so via a "*praxis of secrets*", or in a hidden way. Using nationality-based differences, border diplomacy, and the humanitarian visa policy structure itself, Brazil prevented the arrival of black (forced) migrants, which, combined with the treatment of family members of African refugees, as will be seen below, indicate the racialized nature of the governance of forced migration in that country.

The family reunification visa for refugees as a racial everyday externalization strategy

Refugees, like any human being, have a right to family unity and not to face arbitrary interference in their family lives. However, most refugees end up separated from their families in their search for safety (Martuscelli 2019). Once they have refugee status, refugees cannot return to their countries to enjoy family life there. Therefore, many States have policies that allow family members of refugees to be reunited in asylum countries. These policies comprise of facilitated visa procedures for family members and regularization procedures after their arrival.

The Brazilian Asylum Law 9474/1997 did not create a formal family reunification process. However, article 2 states that "the effect of the refugee condition shall be extensive to his or her spouse, ascendants and descendants, in addition to other members of the family group who are economically dependent on the refugee, provided such members are within the national territory". The lack of mention of the visa procedure grants a lot of power to CONARE to decide about this process. CONARE's Resolution number 4 of 01/12/1998 first regulated the family reunification procedure by providing a form to refugees in Brazil. This process was unclear, with refugees and organizations following different routes. On 20/09/2013, CONARE published Resolution number 16, which created a formal procedure to apply for family reunification visas, requiring evidence of

familial relation and economic dependency (when necessary). After their analysis, CONARE asked MRE to grant the family reunification visa in the nearest consular post to the refugee's family.

Interviews with MRE and CONARE representatives show that until 2017, diplomats had to grant family reunification visas previously analysed and approved by CONARE, despite their own assessments. However, after internal communications from the Brazilian Embassy in Kinshasa alleging fraud and the "potential risk" of a gang trading family reunification visas involving visa applicants, the MRE convinced CONARE that visas were their role and diplomats abroad were more capable than CONARE employees to analyse these visa applications. This changed the *modus operandi* of the family reunification visa procedures. After 2017, MRE telegrams about family reunification visas for refugees granted diplomats the freedom to conduct "a confirmatory examination on the familial relations between the visa applicants and the refugees in Brazil" (Martuscelli 2019). While there was no clear definition what this examination involved, family reunification visa applications of Congolese refugees – the largest group of refugees applying for family reunification in 2018 – started to be denied (Martuscelli 2019).

Analysis of the diplomatic correspondence between the Brazilian consular offices abroad and the MRE headquarters in Brazil from 2013 to 2018 shows that the Brazilian Embassy in Kinshasa denied visas due to three main reasons. First, because evidence of family relations could (allegedly) not be trusted and documents from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were potentially fake. Second, they claimed economic dependency, especially among siblings, could not be confirmed. Finally, they said DRC refugees in Brazil were not "real" refugees, claiming they had lied in their asylum applications. In several official documents, the Brazilian Ambassador to the DRC explained that neither the refugee nor their family member faced persecution in the country and, therefore, should not be recognized as refugees nor be permitted to travel to Brazil.

When analysing the correspondence of other Brazilian consular authorities, such as from Syria or Pakistan (respectively, the second and third largest nationalities applying for family reunification in Brazil in 2018), there were no visas denied, nor similar assumptions made about them as happened with DRC refugees. Instead, visas were granted even in cases where the family did not have all required documents. In the case of Pakistan, diplomats granted visas even in cases individuals did not qualify for tourist visas and used family reunification requests with these purposes, such as siblings who explained they would not live in Brazil with their family, as they just wanted to visit them and return.

Besides the case of the Brazilian Embassy in the DRC, which had the largest number of family reunification visa denials, there were only two other denial cases in the archival research. The first involved the wife of a refugee from Ghana whose family reunification visa was denied when the diplomats discovered that her husband had entered Brazil with a fake visa. The second one was in the Brazilian Embassy in Brazzaville (Republic of Congo), where the Ambassador explained that the refugee's brother was not facing persecution in the country and that the relationship of economic dependency could not be proved.

Interviewed Brazilian government members mentioned that consular authorities have discretion to grant family reunification visas, and each post is autonomous to act differently depending on context. Therefore, it should be reasonable to expect different outcomes depending on where the refugee's family is applying. At the same time,

discriminatory attitudes in family reunification processes might depend on the understanding of the diplomat who granted the visa, as recognized by different government and civil society organizations interviewed, stating the visa process time varies "from Embassy to Embassy". The country-based organisation of Brazilian consular posts abroad also creates country-based patterns of issuance and rejection of family reunification visas, allowing racial biases that underpin these patterns to hide away in nationality-based justifications. The big picture however demonstrates that *all* rejected family reunification visas belonged to black African applicants, for reasons that were not necessarily enough to justify this visa denial, demonstrating how the nation-race dyad are suitable companions, as highlighted above.

Indeed, interviewees from public and civil society organizations supporting refugees in their family reunification procedures noticed some embassies, such as Kinshasa (DRC), Brazzaville (Republic of Congo) and Luanda (Angola), "were not as sensitive" to the situation and ended up "being lazy" or "unwilling to deal with the topic". Additionally, they explained that some consular posts, such as those closer to Syria, had facilitated procedures. One of the interviewees said: "In Jordan, it seems to flow more easily; I haven't noticed any resistance from embassy staff. Now, I have noticed a lot of resistance from the Brazilian embassy in the DRC."

The interviewees recurrently compared Syrian refugees and DRC refugees applying for family reunification since these were the two largest nationalities applying for these visas at the time: "We have noticed that, in Damascus, there seems to be a better treatment than in Kinshasa. I think there is greater sympathy for the situation of Syrians than for Africans in general." "For the Syrians, [family reunification visas] are more easily achieved. Even the process at CONARE is simpler, and the time is shorter. For the Congolese, it takes longer.".

A survey with 487 refugees (representative of the refugee population in Brazil in 2018, 46 per cent self-declared as Black) conducted by UNHCR Brazil and Cátedra Sérgio Vieira de Mello (CSVM) (2019) showed that 41 per cent of the surveyed refugees agreed that they felt discriminated in Brazil. While most of those perceived they were discriminated against for being foreigners (73.5 per cent of the 200 refugees that answered yes to the discrimination question), 104 or 52 per cent of them perceived they suffered racism for being black. The report explains that most Syrians self-identified as white in the survey, therefore, mostly African and black Colombians were the ones suffering racism. Since Haitians were not recognized as refugees in Brazil, they did not participate in this survey. Additionally, the report noted that "the number of 28 police authorities and 34 public employees pointed as authors of acts of discrimination cannot be considered small (14 per cent and 17 per cent respectively) since they are, in theory, the people who are best equipped to welcome and defend refugees" (UNHCR and CSVM 2019, 15), which demonstrate cases of public civil servants' discrimination against refugees. Finally, the report (*idem:* 15) concluded that "the Congolese, the second largest group of refugees in Brazil, are mostly black. Therefore, it is possible to say that this national group is the one that suffers the most obstacles to integration processes". While this does not directly explain the outcomes of family reunification processes, it reflects the reality of black refugees' reception, which, combined with structural forms of racism, as seen above, highlight unequal effects for different (racial) groups in similar situations of the country's policies (or lack thereof).

This is particularly the case when assessing family reunification visas' denials, which mainly affect Black refugees, especially Congolese, allowing us to infer that family reunification visas are used as an everyday hidden externalization practice of Brazilian diplomats to prevent people from entering Brazil, with racialized effects, since they mostly impact black refugee family members. Such hidden everyday externalization practice is part of a "*praxis of secrets*" that happens during the everyday and normalized activities of consular authorities. Since it happens outside Brazil, it is also effective in preventing people from accessing the territory by controlling who can get the visa (and enter the country). As such, family reunification visas for refugees had a practical effect of being an (externalized) racial wall of visas for African refugees (especially DRC nationals), part of an everyday and hidden measure by the Brazilian government with the effect of controlling and denying entrance to migrants (racialized as black).

While the Brazilian family reunification procedure for refugees seems facilitated if we compare it with other countries (Martuscelli 2019, 2023) and is part of a broader humanitarian discourse that places Brazil as a liberal and progressive country towards refugees, Brazil has no procedure of appeal or revision of denied family reunification visas, and no oversight and accountability procedures for the MRE. This paradox of humanitarian discourse and restrictive practice was further reinforced in 2017, when Brazil approved a new Migration Law (Law 13445/2017) that recognized an explicit right to family reunification for all migrants (including refugees) in Brazil. On 30/11/2018, however, CONARE published Resolution number 28, which revoked Resolution number 16 and crystallized the MRE and their diplomats as the responsible authorities for analysing and making the final decision on family reunification visas for refugees. No parallel appeal or accountability mechanism was created.

Conclusion

This paper analysed the use of racialized visa policies as hidden externalization strategies in a Global South country, Brazil. This contributes to the literature on externalization, highly focused on the Global North, by showing how externalization strategies are also mobilized to prevent South-South (undesired) movements. It also contributed to the literature on visa policies. Scholars (i.e. Freier 2013; Laube 2019) have recognized that visa policies and its impact have not received sufficient attention. States employ visas as *the* externalization strategy by definition, and sometimes also develop other more spectacular externalization strategies, particularly when visas fail in preventing people from migrating. As such, studying visa policies as a hidden externalisation strategy of border control is essential. Our paper contributes to that by analysing how humanitarian visas for Haitians and family reunification visa policies for African refugees have an effect of creating and/or compounding a (racial) wall of visas, hidden in the humanitarian visa policy structure and in everyday consular activities.

The Brazilian case illustrates how visa policies have the result of keeping Black forced migrants away, offshoring border control strategy with racialized effects. Our analysis show that other humanitarian visas created for perceived "white" nationals did not have the same structural limitations as the humanitarian visas created for Haitians. Similarly, refugees from nationalities that self-identified as white in Brazil were not denied family reunification visas. By discussing the nation-race dyad as suitable companions where nationality is a

pretence "racially neutral" component to visa policies, Brazil succeeds in keeping a liberal discourse in its visa and migration policies while employing a restrictive and racialized policy in practice, following a historical racial (un)desirability spectrum hidden away in governance structure and everyday activities. This reinforces the "hidden" nature of Brazil's externalization strategy, hiding "race" in nationality-based frameworks and decision-making, a *praxis of secrets* that represents a *continuum* of historical race-based immigration and settlement policies, and acting as a function of coloniality.

The employment of a racial wall of visas as a hidden externalization strategy in Brazil is part of a broader phenomenon of weakening of asylum in the region (see Zapata et al. 2023). By using humanitarian visas as part of a strategy that prevents Haitians from arriving in Brazil and applying for asylum, Brazil paradoxically adopts a humanitarian discourse while denying the right to asylum to Haitians. In parallel, by denying family reunification visas for (mostly African) refugee families with the justification that the refugees and their relatives do not face persecution or have fake documents, Brazil weakens its asylum system, which should be based in the non-criminalization of refugees' modes of arrival. As such, our paper demonstrates not only how visa policies can act as a hidden racialized externalization strategy, framed as humanitarian and liberal migration policies, but also how they are a key component for the weakening of asylum in Brazil and Latin America more broadly.

Notes

1. Koffi is a pseudonym.
2. Ethics approval from the University of Southampton (ERGO # 90801).

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