Administrative records and international estimates for international migration analysis: considerations from Bengali migration in South America

Registros administrativos e estimativas internacionais para análise da migração internacional: considerações a partir dos migração Bengali na América do Sul

Cláudia Siqueira Baltar*
Ronaldo Baltar**

Abstract: This paper addresses the challenges of analyzing contemporary international migration, in the context of South American countries, using databases composed of international migration estimates, from 1990 to 2019, organized by the United Nations, and administrative records produced by the selected countries, between 2000 and 2019. The analysis is developed with reference to the Bengali migration to South America, considered as the expression of one of the trends of South-South migration, in the context of South America, characterized by migratory flows with no historical tradition with the countries of the region. We take into account theories that consider the complexity of contemporary international migrations and their specificities in regional and border contexts. In this study, we organize and discuss United Nations estimates and registration systems for migrants and border movements in South American countries. Our objective is to develop the debate on contemporary international migration, based on the analysis of the data sources available to capture migratory phenomena in the regional context. With this, we seek to contribute to the deepening of studies on south-south international migration in South American countries, considering the complexities of such migratory processes in supranational and border areas.

Resumo: Este artigo aborda os desafios da análise das migrações internacionais contemporâneas, no contexto dos países sul-americanos, a partir do uso de bases de dados compostas pelas estimativas de migração internacional, de 1990 a 2019, organizadas pelas Nações Unidas, e pelos registros administrativos produzidos pelos países selecionados, entre 2000 e 2019. A análise é desenvolvida tendo como referência a migração bengali para a América do Sul, considerada como a expressão de uma das tendências da migração Sul-Sul, no contexto da América do Sul, caracterizada por fluxos migratórios sem tradição histórica com os países da região. Levamos em conta teorias que consideram a complexidade das migrações internacionais contemporâneas e suas especificidades em contextos regionais e fronteiriços. Neste estudo, organizamos e discutimos as estimativas das Nações Unidas e os sistemas de registro de migrantes e movimentos fronteiriços dos países sul-americanos. Nosso objetivo é desenvolver o debate sobre a migração internacional contemporânea, a partir da análise das fontes de dados disponíveis para captação dos fenômenos migratórios no contexto regional. Com isso, busca-se contribuir para o aprofundamento dos estudos sobre a migração internacional sul-sul nos países sul-americanos, considerando as complexidades de tais processos migratórios em áreas supranacionais e fronteiriços.

*Professor and researcher at Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL), Post-Doctorate in Demography (UNICAMP), PhD in Demography (UNICAMP), Coordinator of the Observatory of Populations and Public Policy (ObPPP). E-mail: cbaltar@uel.br. ORCID: 0000-0001-8466-5453.
**Professor and researcher at Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL), PhD in Sociology (USP), Researcher at the Observatory of Populations and Public Policy (ObPPP). E-mail: baltar@uel.br. ORCID: 0000-0002-1079-6415.

Introduction

Since the last decade of the 20th century, international migration has become increasingly complex globally. According to Castles, Miller and Ammendola (2005), De Haas (2008), United Nations (2019), the complexity relates to an increased number of countries being the source and destination of migratory movement. There is a greater diversity of trajectories, resources, and individual characteristics that motivate people to migrate, thus increasing economic, social, cultural, and political implications for destinations and source countries of migration.

Although South America is not of the main destinations of international migration, the continent is becoming more accustomed to such processes. Since 2010, more diversified migratory processes are noted in the region in terms of immigrant origin, trajectories, and motivations. As a result, the debate on South-South migration (CAMPILLO-CARRETE, 2013; PHELPS, 2014) is related to the South American context border migration debate. The different regional border spaces (BAENINGER, 2018) are considered reframed spaces in the context of contemporary international migration.

According to Campillo-Carrete (2013) and Phelps (2014), South-South migration refers to migratory displacement between developing countries, usually located in the global southern hemisphere. This approach gained prominence and importance not only in the southern hemisphere countries but also in different national contexts. The growth of south-south migration reflects the tightening of migratory policies of global north countries (preferred destinations of international migration), creating considerable obstacles in immigration.

Another issue is the re-signification of the borders of different countries. According to Baeninger (2018), borders have become important spaces for south-south transnational migration and circulation, combining historical daily movements and the non-historical migratory flow of Caribbean, African, and Asian people (BAENINGER, 2018, p. 463).

This scenario presents a challenge for migratory studies, since we see the simultaneity of different modalities of migratory movement, with an increasing diversity of motivations, migratory projects, trajectories, mobilization of resources, selectivity, and migrant profiles. Such challenges stimulate the adoption of approaches that refer more to the specificity of migratory processes for a better understanding of the phenomenon (CASTLES; MILLER; AMMENDOLA, 2005; DE HAAS, 2008; SASSEN, 2010, 2016).

Considering this framework, this study aims to address the challenges of analyzing contemporary international migrations, in the context of South American countries, using databases such as estimates of international migration, organized by the United Nations, and by administrative records produced by the selected countries, having as a parameter the Bengali migration to South America, considered as one of the recent trends of South-South migration in the South American context. The time frame for data collection comprises the period from 1990 to 2019.

Initially, we address the possibilities and challenges related to information sources for such assessment, particularly on the administrative records produced and made available by government agencies of different countries, which are becoming an alternative source of information for studies on the most recent migratory movements. Subsequently, we will address South Asian and Bengali migration in the world and focus on the South American context.

This work seeks an opportunity to build a broader perspective of the specificities of South-South migration, which simultaneously considers South American spaces and borders. The movement and circulation of immigrants from various social, political, and cultural contexts lead to new aspects that resignify contemporary international migration in the context of South America.

Data sources: choices and possibilities

Within the field of migration studies, we highlight the importance of regular demographic censuses as the main source of information for internal and international migration analysis, as highlighted by different studies (UNITED NATIONS, 1970; BILSBORROW, 1997, 2011; RIGOTTI, 1999; CUNHA, 2011). Demographic census uses household surveys with specific questions on migration. Therefore, they open several possibilities of crossing data between migration and socioeconomic and demographic variables; capture stock and migratory flow; and determine different spatial intersections, modalities of migration, and population displacement.

However, periodicity is one of the main limitations of census sources, as they are decennial in most countries. As our study is an effort toward a comparative analysis of countries of South America, we researched the Redatam/ECLAC system[1]. Of all demographic censuses carried out in the region from 2010 to 2020, only those of Chile, Colombia, and Peru were held at the end of the decade (2017-2018). In other countries, such censuses were conducted at the beginning of the decade (2010-2012).

As previous studies indicated that the Bengali migration to the region started to stand out after the census surveys of the early part of 2010-2020, we decided not to use this source of migratory information.

In this study, we used the following sources of information: estimates of the number of international migrants from the United Nations and the administrative record of entrance of immigrants/foreigners and their visas from our sample countries.

Estimates of the immigrant population in the international context, made by the United Nations are based on official statistics of the countries obtained from national demographic censuses, population records, or other types of migratory research of national impact.

For this reason, these estimates may present the same limitations inherent to this type of data, such as periodicity, coverage, and diversity of migratory aspects. However, this base was selected due to a special feature: the provision of estimates for all countries in a standardized way in terms of spatial and temporal frames. Due to these characteristics, they make for a first and reasonable approach to trends in international migration from different regions of the world.

In this study, we first use estimates from 1990 to 2019, considering migration from Southeast Asia and their distribution throughout the regions of the world. Second, we consider migrants from Bangladesh and their specific regional distribution.

Administrative records on immigrant entrance and visas have recently become an important alternative source of information for contemporary studies of international migration. However, prior consideration is necessary.

First, these records constitute administrative information of government activities regarding border control (entrance and exit) and grant of a permanent or temporary visa to immigrants/foreigners. Therefore, as highlighted by Oliveira (2015), such administrative records, unlike demographic censuses, do not use household surveys, do not have statistical purpose, and are not designed for migratory movement analysis.

Second, since their goal is to register the permit of visas and movement across borders, the same person may have more than one entry into the base. In addition, spatial and temporal data refer to immigrants' entrance moments into the country or their record in the system, which may not be the same as their current residence information (OLIVEIRA, 2015).

Notably, such data deal only with documented displacement and fail to capture and account for undocumented international movements, which is a relevant portion of contemporary international migration.

Finally, in the development of migratory analyses, Departamento de Extranjería y Migración/DEM (2020) and Oliveira (2015) bring

more accuracy to the debate: notably, international migrant stock cannot be assessed through administrative records. However, migratory trends can be noted based on number of visas granted in a specific time frame and the movement of entrances and exit through border checkpoints.

Table 1 shows the government agencies in South American countries analyzed in this study.

Table 1 comprises our research and assessment of migratory administrative data in different Latin American countries, with records made available on each government website. We were unable to locate systems and organs focused on migratory management for four such countries.

Adding to this picture, Table 2 presents the type of data made available by each country.

Table 1 – Governmental systems and agencies of migration registration researched.

Countries	System	Department	Executive Branch Agency
Brazil	Sistema Nacional de Registro Migratório (SISMIGRA)	Polícia Federal	Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública
	Sistema de Tráfego Internacional (STI)		
Chile	Registros Administrativos	Departamento de Extranjería y Migración	Ministerio del Interior y Seguridad Publica
Argentina	Estadísticas Migraciones	Dirección Nacional de Migraciones	Ministerio del Interior
Uruguay	Estadísticas	Dirección Nacional de Migraciones	Ministerio del Interior
Paraguay	Estadísticas	Dirección General de Migraciones	Ministerio del Interior
Ecuador	Nacionalidad y Puerto		Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana
Colombia	Registro de Activos de Información Migración		Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores / Migración
Peru	Estadísticas de nacionales y extranjeros	Superintendência Nacional de Migraciones	Ministerio del Interior
Bolivia	Area de Análisis Migratorio	Dirección General de Migraciones	Ministerio de Gobierno
Venezuela	No equivalent system and organ found		
Guyana	No equivalent system and organ found		
Suriname	No equivalent system and organ found		
French Guiana	No equivalent system and organ found		

Source: Own research data.

Table 2 – Types of migratory information in administrative registration systems.

Countries	Type of migratory information				
	Permanent records	Temporary records	Asylum seeker	Entry movement of migrants	Exit movement of migrants
Brazil	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Chile	▓	▓	▓		
Argentina	▓	▓			
Uruguay	▓	▓			
Paraguay				▓	▓
Ecuador				▓	▓
Colombia				▓	
Peru				▓	▓
Bolivia*					

Source: Own research data. (*) Types of movement unclear: data not considered in the analysis.

There are many differences in the information provided by each migratory administrative system. This is a challenge for comparative studies on such data.

Moreover, even countries that provide the same type of information have different standards. There is no homogeneity regarding the content or ways in which data is made available in different countries. Thus, there are many types of divergence: nomenclature, type of visas, temporal coverage, data format (pdf, excel, csv, word), and dismembering of nationality information.

In some countries, such as Argentina, differences are noted between data from one year to the other, thus preventing their full application in this study. In the case of Bolivia, the nomenclature used in the report (in pdf) hindered the characterization of the types of records and, therefore, the country was excluded from the analysis. Regarding Peru, a change in the way of dismembering nationality information made it impossible to rely on immigrant records from Bangladesh. Thus, this country was also removed from the study.

Finally, Brazil and Chile are the only countries that present similarities with the administrative record display format. Both countries provide information in csv format, with the same temporal coverage and types of variables. Therefore, later studies can conduct a more in-depth comparative analysis on them.

As for religion, in the second analytical dimension this paper proposes, the discussion on data sources was not as extensive and complex as that on the migration dimension.

First, we assessed the issue of "religion" by analyzing demographic censuses of countries that are part of this study using the Redatam/ECLAC system. Only Brazil and Peru have this information as part of census surveys. Therefore, we excluded such information as it would not help accomplish our objectives.

United Nations estimates and administrative record of countries do not bring this dimension in their bases. Therefore, we needed another strategy. Another source of information, i.e., international studies on population and religion from the Pew Research Center[2], it was noted that more than 90% of Bangladesh's population comprised Muslims in 2010. Our decision was to consider that all information or records related to Bangladesh should be treated as Muslim Bengalis.

South Asia in the context of international migration

Bangladesh and other South Asian countries (India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) are characterized by being important "remittance economies", according to Ozaki (2012). Annually, a large number of workers emigrate from these countries and, on the other hand, a significant amount of remittances is

returned, thus becoming an important resource for each country's economic development.

Moreover, for many leaders in South Asian countries, labor migration has been an important strategy to reduce unemployment and poverty and increase foreign currency reserves (OZAKI, 2012; BHAT; RATHER, 2017).

According to Ozaki (2012), it is possible to distinguish two distinct phases of South Asian labor migration: the first phase, from the 1950s to the 1960s, is characterized by immigrants and permanent residents with coveted qualifications such as doctors, academics, and engineers who migrated to developed countries, mostly on the global west.

The second phase began in the 1970s, with a growing predominance of temporary, low-skilled, or unskilled migrant workers, mainly directed to oil-producing countries in the Middle East. The main destination countries initially included Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and Iraq. From the end of the 1980s, newly industrialized countries in East and Southeast Asia became part

of the main destinations, such as the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore (OZAKI, 2012, p. 1).

Notably, since the 1970s, the main destinations of South Asian migration have been countries from different parts of the Asian continent. This is confirmed by United Nations estimates[3] presented in Table 3.

The estimates on South Asian migration in the last three decades indicate that the numbers have almost doubled in the international context, with 24,5 million people in 1990 and more than 42 million in 2019. Asia is the main destination, with a share of more than 80% of the total. Even so, regarding South Asian immigrant presence all over the world, numbers have significantly increased.

In another perspective, the data presented in Table 4 show the presence of South Asian migration in international immigration in different regions of the world. The migration rates changed between one period and another, ranging from 13,8% in 1995 to 2005 and 16% in 1990. In the last year of the series, we had a 15,5% share.

Table 3 – Total international migrants (stock) from South Asia by destination region, 1990-2019.

World regions	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019
Africa	47,589	54,788	68,927	88,507	118,712	137,008	147,659
Asia	21,738,688	18,567,917	19,588,062	20,362,149	26,182,359	29,485,734	31,471,860
Europe	1,505,588	1,753,504	2,021,133	2,620,316	3,219,011	3,702,565	4,394,369
Latin America and Caribe	8,552	9,871	11,503	13,888	17,980	22,719	24,907
North America	1,073,869	1,708,506	2,362,856	3,022,168	3,750,020	4,572,795	4,988,503
Oceania	163,408	197,761	241,798	364,747	663,325	939,252	1,158,203
World	**24,537,694**	**22,292,347**	**24,294,279**	**26,471,775**	**33,951,407**	**38,860,073**	**42,185,501**

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division (2019). International Migrant Stock 2019 (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2019).

**Table 4 – Participation (%) of immigrants from South Asia in total
international immigrants by destination region, 1990-2019.**

World regions	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019
Africa	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.6
Asia	45.1	40.0	39.7	38.1	39.7	38.2	37.7
Europe	3.0	3.3	3.6	4.1	4.6	4.9	5.3
Latin America and Caribe	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
North America	3.9	5.1	5.9	6.7	7.4	8.2	8.5
Oceania	3.5	3.9	4.5	6.1	9.3	11.6	13.0
World	**16.0**	**13.8**	**14.0**	**13.8**	**15.4**	**15.6**	**15.5**

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division (2019). International Migrant Stock 2019 (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2019)

In regional terms, for the selected period, such migration is highly relevant in the Asian continent. It has been decreasing, however, since 1990, when it represented 45% of the migration to Asia and fell to 38% in 2019.

Moreover, South Asian immigrant proportion has been growing in all other global regions, especially Oceania and North America. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference in the levels of participation. Regarding Latin America and the Caribbean, we have the lowest level of South Asian participation in this period, pointing to a small yet existent growth.

We do not take United Nations estimates as an exact account of immigrant stock but as trends in contemporary international migration. In this study, it is important to highlight that many aspects of the recent international context, such as the financial crisis of 2007-2008, crises as a result of the Arab Spring, and changes in the migratory policies of developed countries (AMARAL; MILESI; MUÑOZ, 2014), may have influenced a shift in South Asian labor migration to other destinations.

This adds to the cultural dimension of such migrations, since most countries are predominantly Muslim (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Maldives, and Pakistan). Alongside a "perennial supply" of migrant labor, this may take us to a specific and new, to some extent, regard in the debate of the relationship between migration and development. A greater complexity is part of the context of deepening globalization, which leads to the internationalization of some economic activities and, consequently, certain spaces and territories.

This study investigates the possibility of a Bengali migratory process to South America in the recent period. The initial motivation is related to previous studies, as they explored the debate on the relationship between migration, religion, and development in the context of expanding the meat market from Brazil to Muslim countries and creating the need to perform *halal slaughter*[4]. The insertion of Bengali immigrants was an important part of this process.

Bengali migration in South America

Located in South Asia, Bangladesh ranks eighth among the world's most populous countries, with 163 million inhabitants in 2019 (UNITED NATIONS, 2019) and one of the highest population density levels, with more than 1,000 inhabitants per km². In confessional terms, according to the Pew Research Center[5], more than 90% of its population is Muslim.

As highlighted in the previous section, since 1970 to the present day, Bangladesh is one of the main sources of labor immigration from South Asia, being part of the largest "shipping economy" (OZAKI, 2012; BHAT; RATHER, 2017).

According to data based on the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), a Bangladeshi government body, presented in Barkat and Ahmed (2014), about 8,307,000 labor migrants

emigrated from the country from 1976 to 2012, with an exit of 223,270 people per year on average. After 2007, emigration rates were higher than 800,000 people in some years.

Specialized literature also shows Middle East countries as the main destination of Bengali migration, especially the UAE, with 38% of these labor migrants in 2010 (BARKAT; AHMED, 2014; NEELIM; SIDDIQUI, 2015; BHAT; RATHER, 2017).

In the first global approach to Bengali migration, Table 5 summarizes United Nations estimates on different regions of the world.

Starting 2000, Bengali migration has increased continuously in international and regional contexts. Nevertheless, 94% and 89% of these immigrants were destined to the Asian continent between 2000 and 2019. Table 6 shows the different growth rates in the different regions.

Table 5 – Total international migrants (stock) from Bangladesh by destination Region, 1990-2019.

World regions	1990	2000	2010	2019
Africa	3,078	2,674	11,137	14,791
Asia	5,287,899	5,110,121	6,148,292	7,026,940
Europe	130,797	198,131	352,908	435,166
Latin America and Caribe	71	58	174	219
South America	**5**	**22**	**81**	**114**
North America	25,617	120,023	204,852	302,730
Oceania	4,369	11,715	32,752	55,306
World	**5,451,831**	**5,442,722**	**6,750,115**	**7,835,152**

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division (2019). International Migrant Stock 2019 (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2019)

Table 6 – Population growth rate annual (%), total international migrants from Bangladesh by destination region, 1990-2019.

World regions	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2019
Africa	-1.40	15.33	3.20
Asia	-0.34	1.87	1.50
Europe	4.24	5.94	2.36
Latin America and Caribe	-2.00	11.61	2.59
South America	**15.97**	**13.92**	**3.87**
North America	16.70	5.49	4.44
Oceania	10.37	10.83	5.99
World	**-0.02**	**2.18**	**1.67**

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division (2019). International Migrant Stock 2019 (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2019).

Considering such data as indicator of Bengali migration trends, a positive growth tendency stands out globally in the first two decades of the 21st century, following a period of decrease in the 1990s. In regional terms, the Asian continent ended up setting the tone for the global dynamics of Bengali migration. There was a decrease in the 1990s, followed by a resumption of positive growth in 2000 and 2010.

Compared with Asia, the continents of Africa and Latin America, and the Caribbean showed the same pattern: a decrease period followed by two periods of positive growth but with a more rapid growth in the 2000s.

South America particularly stands out regarding the growth dynamic of Bengali migration. With positive growth in all periods, it is closer to European, North American, and Oceanian rates, showing differences in intensity between one decade and another.

This highlights the fact that despite low estimates, the United Nations indicates the potential of South America as a new destination of Bengali migratory flow.

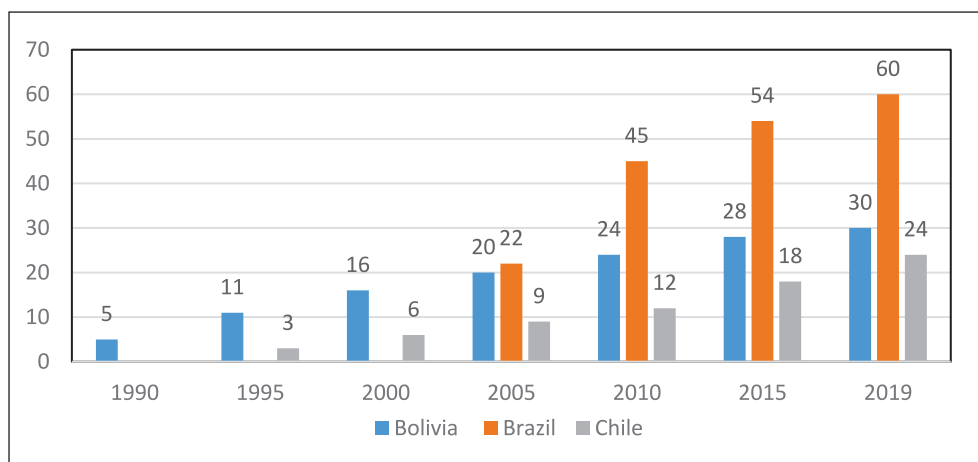Focusing on the South American countries, Graph 1 illustrates such estimates and their evolution in 1990-2019.

Figure 1 – Total Bengali migrant, by selected countries, South America, 1990-2019.
Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division (2019). International Migrant Stock 2019 (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2019).

First, United Nations estimates indicate Bolivia as the main destination of Bengali immigrants for 1990-2000, followed by Chile. This scenario began to change 2005 onward when the estimates showed a volume increase and a trend pointing Brazil as the main destination of Bengalese people, with more than 50% in migration per year.

Although the number of immigrants is numerically insignificant, the estimates of the arrival of Bengalese people to South America represent a first approximation to the migratory flow between different regions of the world. They are important because they provide a scenario of trends on new migration processes taking place in the regional context.

We accessed the data on permanent and temporary visas and border control of the international circulation of people on administrative records from different countries of South America. We closely analyze the migratory movement of the region as this information provides a different scenario from that of the United Nations.

This is highlighted in the data presented in Table 7, referring to records of immigrants and refuge solicitors born in Bangladesh from selected South American countries.

As previously discussed, not all countries in South America provide data through a system of immigrant registration. Among those who do, we recall that there are important differences in information content, availability, and type.

Notably, the administrative records show a rather different picture from that provided by the United Nations estimates regarding the migratory movement of Bengalese people in South America in terms of volume of immigrants and countries of destination.

Table 7 shows that Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina had administrative data on immigrant visas. From 2000 to 2019, only Brazil and Chile provide information for all years. In turn, in Uruguay and Argentina, information is not available for every year, interfering with data assessment on Bengali immigrants.

**Table 7 – Total registered immigrants and asylum seekers, born in
Bangladesh, by selected destination countries, South America, 2000-2019.**

Countries	2000-2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2000-2019
Brazil	112	38	117	159	1,919	1,045	1,701	299	751	1,333	1,481	8,955
Chile	25	3	7	4	3	5	10	18	21	13	9	118
Uruguay	-	0	18	14	15	13	21	25	15	8	-	129
Argentina	37	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	41
Total	**174**	**45**	**142**	**177**	**1,937**	**1,063**	**1,732**	**342**	**787**	**1,354**	**1,490**	**9,243**

Data sources: Brazil: Sistema Nacional de Registros Migratórios and Sistema de Tráfego Internacional (Polícia Federal/ Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública; Chile: Departamento de Extranjería y Migración; Uruguay: Dirección Nacional de Migración; Argentina: Dirección Nacional de Migraciones/ Ministerio del Interior.

Note: Information on asylum seekers is available only in Brazil and Chile,
and was added to the total number of registered immigrants.

(-) Information not available adequately.

Despite such diversity, Bengali migration has become more expressive, especially since 2013. Brazil is the main focus, followed by the average participation of Chile and Uruguay.

Figure 1 illustrates the presence of Bengali migration in countries that have such information based on their administrative records.

In turn, the data in Table 8 show the movement of Bengali immigrants through border posts in South American countries that provide such information.
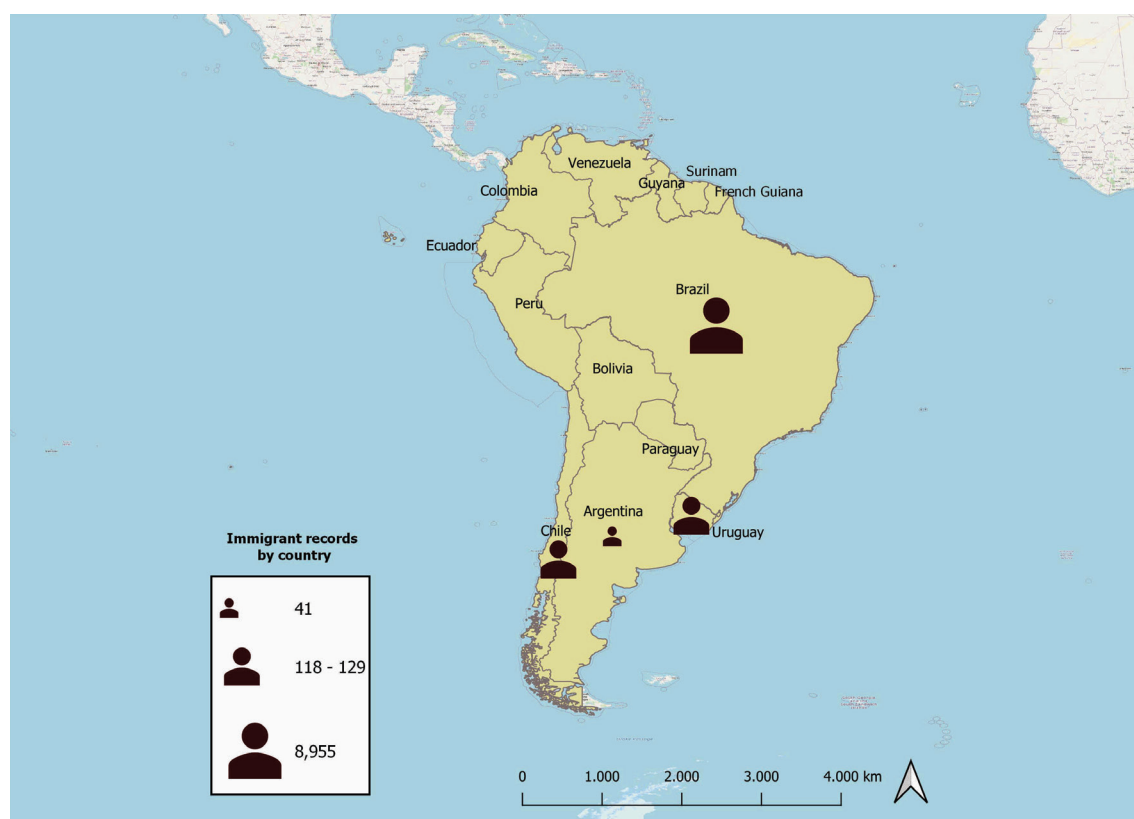

Figure 1 – Total registered Bengali immigrants, selected countries, period 2000-2019.
Data sources: Brazil: Sistema Nacional de Registros Migratórios and Sistema de Tráfego Internacional (Polícia Federal/ Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública; Chile: Departamento de Extranjería y Migración; Uruguay: Dirección Nacional de Migración; Argentina: Dirección Nacional de Migraciones/ Ministerio del Interior.

Table 8 – Movement of Bengali immigrants, border posts of selected South American countries, 2010-2019.

Countries	Period	Movement at border posts			
		Entrance	Exit	Balance	Total
Brazil	2010-2019	15,660	10,487	5,173	26,147
Ecuador	2010-2019	1,159	426	733	1,585
Paraguay	2015-2019	444	258	186	702
Colombia	2012-2019	537	-	-	537
Total		17,800	11,171	6,092	28,971

Data sources: Brazil: Sistema de Tráfego Internacional (Polícia Federal/ Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública; Ecuador: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana; Paraguay: Dirección General de Migraciones; Colombia: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores/ Migración.

(-) Information not available.

Only Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Colombia provide information on movement through border checkpoints, with differences in the covered time frame. In the case of Colombia, there is no information on foreign exits.

Regarding the number of movements of Bengalese people registered in the region, 90% of the 28.900 movements were across Brazilian borders, divided into 15.000 entries and 10.000 exits. Ecuadorian borders presented 1.500 movements and Colombian borders had about 500 entry records, pointing to an important area of circulation in the region near Central America and the Caribbean.

Finally, presenting important border areas with Brazil and Argentina, Paraguay stands out showing about 700 entries of movement of Bengalese people on their border checkpoints.

Figure 2 illustrates the entrance movement of Bengali migrants through border checkpoints to countries that had this information available.

Figure 2 – Entry movements of Bengali immigrants, border posts of selected countries, period 2010-2019.
Data sources: Brazil: Sistema de Tráfego Internacional (Polícia Federal/ Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública; Ecuador: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana; Paraguay: Dirección General de Migraciones; Colombia: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores/ Migración.

A new round of survey of this type of record is needed, reaching countries with different strategies. Even so, the information we collected and organized thus far allows us to see an expressive circulation of Bengali immigrants in the South American context in the recent period.

Notably, these are migratory movements that do not have a historical past regarding the countries of the region, culturally distinct from Muslim people. They might allow us to frame a South Asian logic of labor migration. To better understand this regarding South America, one would have to deepen the analysis started in this study.

One of our research results is that a comparative analysis between countries using this survey sample would only be possible for Brazil and Chile due to the presence of similar immigrant record systems in content and form.

We elaborated possible explanations for this migratory process configuration by using studies already carried out on Bengali immigrants in Brazil, based on the administrative record, their territorial distribution in the country, administrative work records, research in local newspapers, and actors and organizations that locally welcome and assist immigrants. Figure 3 illustrates the territorial distribution of Bengali immigrants in Brazil based on the administrative record.
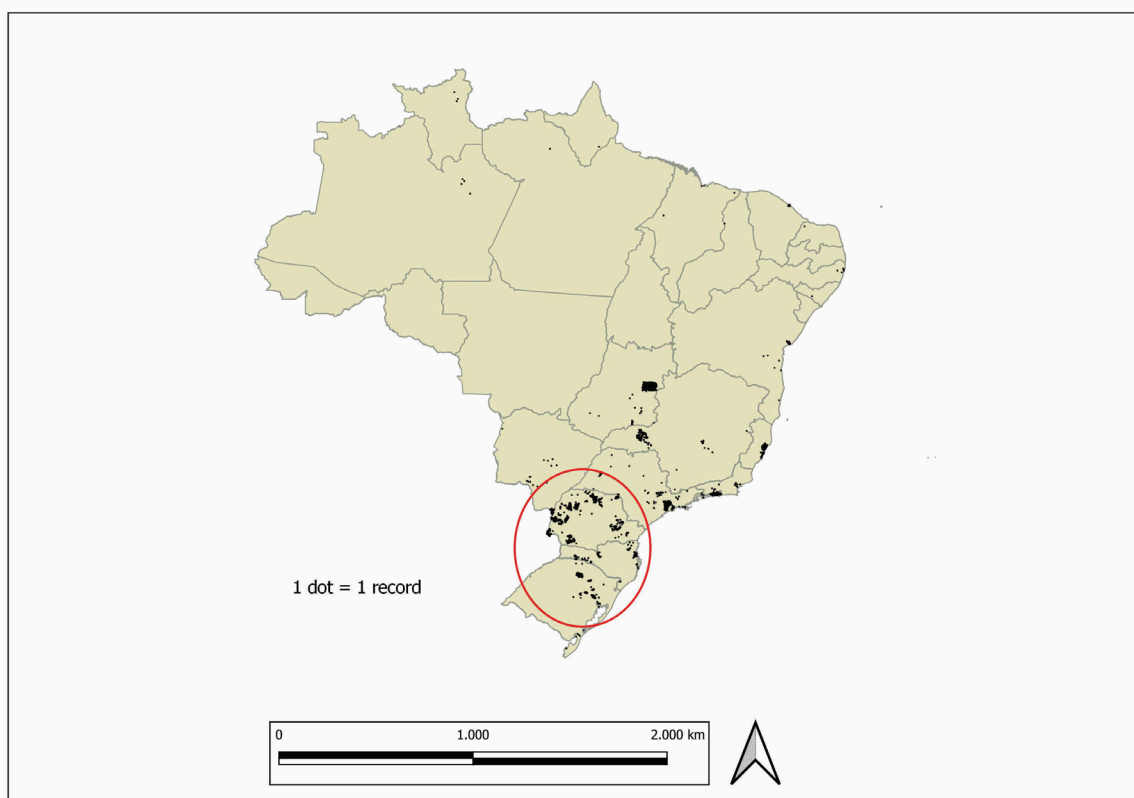

Figure 3 – Bengali immigrants registered, according to the municipality of residence, Brazil, 2000-2019.
Source: Sistema de Registro Nacional Migratório (SISMIGRA), Polícia Federal/ Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública do Brasil/OBMigra.

Administrative records point to the city of São Paulo in the southeast region as the main space of contemporary international migration of the country for all nationalities, in general. However, the specificity of the territorial distribution of Bengali immigrants in the southern states (highlighted in red, on the map) caught our attention.

In this sense, ongoing studies show that Bengalese presence in these states is growing in medium-sized and small municipalities. This takes place exactly where poultry slaughtering and further processing facilities are present. Additionally, they export meat to Islamic countries. These immigrants are responsible for the *Halal slaughter* and such growth in Bengalese presence peaked between 2014 and 2017.

Bengalese people were preceded by Senegalese and Ghanaians in the *Halal slaughter*. Nevertheless, different factors lead us to our initial empirical and theoretical research on the complex relationship between migration, religion, and development. Regarding the Bengalese people, we have specificities such as Bengali labor migration in Bangladesh, economic situation of meat industry, and spaces of Bengali migration in the interior portions of Southern states in Brazil.

Conclusions

The scenario of contemporary international migration, particularly in its South-South dimensions (CAMPILLO-CARRETE, 2013; PHELPS, 2014), has been posing challenges for migratory research on supranational and border spaces and dynamics in theoretical-conceptual, methodological, and empirical terms.

This study initially sought to measure the flow of Bengali migration in different countries of South America. With such transnational research agenda, one of the first challenges became evident, relating to the availability and potential of information sources on international contemporary migration.

In this sense, our first strategy was to organize and analyze estimates. Such data were previously surveyed and made available by the

United Nations. We could then analyze the first approach to the trends of Bengali migration in South America. The advantage of these estimates was that they presented information in a broad timeframe and standard format for all countries. Nevertheless, they were unable to resolve queries that originated in the course of the research.

Therefore, we sought to respond to these specificities through the survey of sources of information from the South American countries. Two common aspects were identified: First, it was difficult to use census data since, in most countries, the last census round occurred around 2010, thus preceding the intensification and diversification of recent international migration processes in the regional context.

Secondly, we identified a trend on the availability of administrative record about entrance and immigrant visas in different countries. Although there are no standards on the organization and availability of such data, we observed that in some countries, such as Brazil and Chile, administrative record is recognized as an alternative source of data for recent international migration research, particularly in the intercensal period (OLIVEIRA, 2015; DEM, 2020).

We observed differences between the two types of databases on Bengali migration in the South American context. The information from government administrative records allowed us to analyze the complexity of distribution and circulation of such immigrants in the continent. Our understanding is that these administrative bases are a source of information with great analytical potential for the nonhistorical migratory flow of Bengalese people and increasing regional migratory movements of Haitians and Venezuelans.

Thus, we stress the importance of refining research instruments. One has to survey and organize information on the migratory reality of countries on a regular basis and with standards. This is a condition for a more in-depth and revealing comparative analysis on the specificities of South-South migration in regional and border contexts.

The reality of contemporary international migration, particularly South-South migration, is notably dynamic and complex, presenting many layers. The adoption of an analytical perspective that transcends national borders lets us pursue and understand this complexity, thus providing us a deep conceptual and juridical reflection on new emerging issues on contemporary migratory processes.

Notes

1 Information obtained through the website of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC): https://www.cepal.org/pt-br/topicos/redatam/o-redatam.

2 Information obtained from the data system organized by the Pew Research Center at the following address: http://globalreligiousfutures.org/explorer - /?subtopic=15&chartType=map&year=2020&data_type=percentage&religious_affiliation=23&destination=to&countries=Worldwide&age_group=all&gender=all&pdfMode=false.

3 For United Nations estimates, South Asia comprises the following countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

4 According to Amaral, Milesi e Munõz. (2014, p. 75), *Halal* slaughter is a ritual of animal sacrifice for human consumption in accordance with sharia or Islamic law. Prayer in the name of *Allah* for gratitude and forgiveness for the act of sacrifice is the way to attain "permission" for slaughter. Due to these characteristics, *Halal slaughterting* can only be performed by Muslims.

5 Footnote 2.

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