Environmentally Internally Displaced Persons in the Northeastern Backlands of Brazil

Environmentally Internally Displaced Persons in the Northeastern Backlands of Brazil:

A Case Study

By

Andrea Pacheco Pacifico

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Environmentally Internally Displaced Persons in the Northeastern Backlands of Brazil: A Case Study

By Andrea Pacheco Pacifico

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-8999-4
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8999-5

To my father
Romildo Pacifico dos Santos (*in memoriam*),
who, as an environmentally internally displaced person from the Backlands of Brazil`s Northeast, taught me how to love the region and its people.

“Sertanejo is, before everything, a strong person.”
(Euclides da Cunha (1866-1909), a Brazilian writer, journalist, and sociologist, in *The Backlands* (1902), his most famous book, divided into two parts: The Backlands (the land and the man) and The Rebellion).

“If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”
(African proverb)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

FOREWORD

Andrea Pacheco Pacifico's timely and important book situates Northeastern Brazil - a region known as 'semi-arid' due to its periodic extreme droughts which have led to regular out-migrations to Southern Brazil - as a case study in the context of climate change, environmentally-induced migration, and legal theory and practice.

By tracing the historical and economic background of the region, she shows how environmental changes build on pre-existing socio-political conditions to heighten inequities, which lead to human migration, and how responses must include this deep awareness if they are to be effective.

The history of economic and environmental exploitation of Northeastern Brazil since European colonization in 1500 progressively reduced the region's resilience, increasing the frequency and severity of droughts and related crises (especially in recent years), and thus its susceptibility to climate change. As environmentally-induced migration increases worldwide, with similar but distinct histories of colonization and global inequities, this study has growing policy relevance at regional, national, and global levels. Comparative information on migration policies and legal frameworks in other regions and countries, which the book richly provides, facilitates this global analysis.

Pacheco Pacifico discusses many related issues, such as discrimination against migrants, the role of climate-related policy structures, such as National Adaptation Plans and the Green Climate Fund, disaster and emergency preparedness structures, and various national and international legal regimes developed to address migration within countries and across national borders. She thus approaches migration policies from many different perspectives, showing the interrelationships among many economic, environmental, social, global, and local factors that influence migration.

The book assembles and presents the author's impressive, comprehensive, comparative research on legal regimes' inclusion (or not) of environmental conditions in relation to migration and the rights of migrants. As a lawyer and legal scholar who is also a sociologist and political scientist with decades of international research and practical experience on human rights and migration, Pacheco Pacifico is uniquely qualified to write this sweeping interdisciplinary study.

In her analysis of international norms, migration's potential to destabilize existing economic and political structures, and the need for 'regime stretching' to accommodate environmentally-induced migration, Pacheco Pacifico's book makes a significant and compelling contribution to the existing literature on migration, climate change, and humanity's future.

Toronto, Canadá, 1 September 2021.

Prof. Dr. Patricia Elaine (Ellie) Perkins
Faculty of Environmental Studies
York University

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between human beings and the environment is as old as humankind. However, time and space show singular practices and realities according to local needs and resources. With technological and communication revolutions, it is possible to know of different past and present practices, as well as to foresee the future, in order to adapt human needs to nature in a sustainable way. This book deals with this relationship between human beings and the environment within Brazil, particularly in the Backlands of Brazil's Northeast, in order to search for legal and policy responses not yet applied in the region.

The originality of the Brazilian case results from its continental size and regional heterogeneity, which shows many types of internal migrant and, hence, can be analysed by focused studies, on return or low-income migrants, or specific topics, such as rural-urban migration and Amazonia (Golgher; Rosa, Araujo Jr. 2005, 30), in addition to displaced persons as a result of droughts, dams, mega-events (for instance, the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro and the 2014 FIFA World Cup), hydro-electric power plants, natural disasters (for instance floods and droughts), anthropogenic disasters, and forest fires.

The focus of this book is to categorise those environmentally displaced persons as internally displaced persons (IDPs), according to the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and other, legally and non-legally binding, instruments, so that they receive international legal protection, even in the absence of binding norms and institutions to protect them and their rights. In fact, the 1998 Guiding Principles are not a legally binding instrument, nevertheless they have been considered very useful for some Latin American countries, such as Mexico, Colombia, and Peru, which have created and implemented domestic laws and policies to protect IDPs in accordance with them.

Some suggestions are given to categorise and protect environmentally IDPs from disasters, particularly from the Backlands of Brazil`s Northeast, such as those related to the implementation of human rights instruments, regime stretching on the implementation level (Betts 2010a), adaptation considering local people and land characteristics (Zetter 2010), and cross-issue persuasion (Betts, 2009), as well as a network society communicative model based on a collaborative approach among local people, the government,

international organisations and NGOs, established or not, in the region (Pacifico 2013).

Far from delivering final solutions for this dilemma, that is, how intermittent droughts lead to forced displacement and, therefore, to conflict, labels, insecurity, and absence of state protection, this first chapter provides a brief outline of environmentally internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Brazil, a country where each region has its own peculiarities, particularly regarding environmental change and socio-economic and political issues, culminating in different approaches to deal with the migration-environmental nexus. The first chapter also describes the hybrid Brazilian regime to deal with the international and internal displacement of persons, and the diversity of humans displaced through its 1997 Refugee Law and its 2017 Migration Law.

Secondly, the book gives a historical overview of the so-called 'Industry of Drought', which means the politicisation of drought by the local political elite, including local politicians and the Church, which has permeated the Backlands of Brazil`s Northeast for centuries, in addition to analysis of the causes and consequences of conflicts that come with it. The third chapter examines the peculiarities of the region and human displacement, in comparison to other regions of the world, to some Brazilian states, and within the region, that is, the Northeastern semi-arid region, where humans and the environment are most affected by drought.

Fourthly, the book evaluates the patterns of migration within Brazil`s Northeast, the region from which EDPs, particularly from areas susceptible to desertification (ASDs), come. It then demonstrates some pull and push factors that have built the patterns of forced displacement from the Brazilian Backlands to other parts of the country, as well as the consequences linked to these. This chapter also gives past and present features of this region, as well as future scenarios, in comparison to other parts of the world.

Chapter Five, "In the Search for Categorisation", shows the reasons for legal categorisation of these IDPs from this region, examining suggestions from United Nations' countries, NGOs, academia, and other actors. Hence, the book also evaluates proposals to categorise general human displacement by climate change or environmental change, particularly disasters, be they international or internal, in general, and in comparison to other places.

The last chapter provides some suggestions to prevent or, at least, to minimise the local impact of environmental degradation on people's lives and their wellbeing, by comparing legal and policy initiatives already developed abroad to protect the basic human rights of environmentally displaced persons from other parts of the world and, considering the peculiarities of the Backlands of Brazil`s Northeast, which are susceptible

to desertification (ASDs), to protect those IDPs who are still invisible in the international community.

Methodologically, this book is the result of advanced and explanatory research, the object of which has been under the focus of the author for more than a decade, with a quantitative-qualitative approach to data collected from different primary and secondary sources, for instance, treaties, laws, official documents, reports, doctrine, and field research, in the Backlands of Brazil`s Northeast (in the state of Alagoas). As a case-study, compared with other regions of the world, the book applies an inductive method, from describing environmentally IDPs from this region to proposing legal and policy initiatives to protect their basic human rights, and the basic human rights of environmentally IDPs in other parts of the world, so good practices may be replicated, adjusted, and implemented everywhere.

In short, readers, not only from the Global South, but also from the Global North, should consider this book. There is quite a lot of literature on people who are internally displaced (IDPs) because of climate change and environmental degradation, especially disasters, in Latin America. Domestic laws, policies, and initiatives, when in existence, usually reflect on IDPs who flee from armed conflicts. Lack of available data and political will may be among the causes of this invisibility, contrary to what has happened in some African and Asian countries, whose literature is vast and where international assistance, through cooperation with state and non-state actors, gives positive results.

CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF ENVIRONMENTALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (EDPS) WITHIN BRAZIL

Whilst many countries in the Global North have adopted one national regime for migrants and refugees, for instance the 2001 Canadian Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (with the 2019 amendment) and the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) with the 2020 new Pact on Migration and Asylum, the Brazilian government provides hybrid protection for migrants and refugees within its territory, in addition to the existence of two different regimes. Hence, it is of paramount importance to differentiate the Brazilian roadmap to protect migrants and refugees within the territory.

Brazil has two different regimes to protect international migrants within its territory: a regime for voluntary/economic migrants in general, including international environmentally displaced persons and Brazilian citizens living abroad, and another regime for convention refugees and asylum seekers. The 2017 Migration Law (n.13445), regulates the former regime, through the National Council for Immigration (CNIg), whilst the 1997 Refugee Law (n.9474), regulates the latter, through the National Council for Refugees (CONARE).

This sometimes causes confusion in foreigners' minds, in addition to the fact that Brazilian authorities have sometimes induced them to request regular status in Brazil under one or another regime. Doing field research, this author has met some Venezuelans, who left the Northern state of Roraima for other parts of the country, and have said that they have been induced to apply for migrants' visas by the Brazilian authorities, in other to reduce the burden on the refugee regime.

In general, the Brazilian government has applied different approaches and concepts to deal with international and internal migration within its territory. At first, international migrants may be Brazilian returnees, economic migrants (for work, healthcare, study, tourism, family reunification, etc.), and forced migrants, for instance refugees, asylum seekers, trafficked persons, and stateless persons. Secondly, for Muggah

(2014), internal migrants may be voluntary (for work, healthcare, study, tourism, family reunification, etc.), or forced migrants, for instance those fleeing from gangs, militias, and the police system, being under witness and victim protection programmes, or not; those relocated or resettled for development projects or large-scale events; or those forced to flee from disasters (floods and droughts, or any environmental change).

Correa et al. have compared the legal protection provided in Brazil, for instance, to Congolese, Syrian, Haitian, and Ganese citizens. The first two groups were recognised as convention refugees, though Congoleses` claims were analysed individually and Syrians were granted *prima facie* recognition. Regarding the latter, they may be seen as survival migrants (Betts 2013). Haitians were granted, in an *ad hoc* way, permanent visas for humanitarian reasons, according to CNIg Resolution 97/2012, and Ganese citizens were not considered as conventional refugees, nor were they granted *ad hoc* protection by the Brazilian Government.

According to Pacifico and Silva (2017), at first, more than 2,000 Syrians were recognised as conventional refugees in Brazil, according to the National Council of Refugee (CONARE), between its National Resolution (RN n.17), of 20 September 2013 (which recognises the high proportion of the Syrian Humanitarian Crisis), and 2016, plus 1,287 between January 2017 and August 2020. The Brazilian Embassies in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey also issued more than 7,750 visas, following RN 17/2013. This number increased to 3,594 Syrian refugees at the end of 2020 (Silva et al. 2021, 4). In total, Brazil had 57,099 recognised conventional refugees at the end of 2020 (Silva et al. 2021, 4).

Secondly, as a result of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, many Congolese have claimed asylum in Brazil, and CONARE has analysed each claim individually, having already granted asylum to 1,361 people, to August 2020. It should be noted that family reunification and marriage have been the major reasons for people claiming asylum in Brazil.

Thirdly, Haitians started to come to Brazil after the 2010 earthquake, having been denied refugee status, despite the 1997 Brazilian Refugee Law n.9474, which also defines a refugee as a person who leaves the country of nationality or residence due to grave and generalised human rights violation (art.1°), following the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. Hence, to fill a gap in the Brazilian Legal Order, CNIg approved Resolution 97, of 12 January 2012 (extending its deadline several times), granting permanent visas for more than 26,000 Haitians (until July 2015) for humanitarian reasons. In addition, the Brazilian Embassies in Port-au-Principe and Quito had power to grant this kind of visa for Haitians.

Haitians have been able to apply for temporary visas for humanitarian assistance since 2017, after the new Migration Law came into force. According to the regulatory Decree (Art. 14, I, c, and paragraph 3°), the reasons for this type of visa are situation, or grave human rights or humanitarian law violation, or other hypotheses.

Fourthly, some Ganese citizens came to Brazil for the 2014 FIFA World Cup, with tourist visas. On arrival, they claimed asylum, however, all these claims for refugee status were denied. Hence, CNIg granted authorisation to remain to 300 Ganese citizens who already lived in Brazil (Brazilian Ministry of Social Security 2016). There was no other special protection. For instance, between January 2017 and December 2020, 209 Ganese people claimed for asylum in Brazil, but only three of them had their refugee status recognised (Brazil, CONARE 2020).

Fifthly, the reception of Venezuelans in Brazil, who have arrived mainly through the land borders since 2014, as a consequence of the economic, political, and social turmoil that has affected the country should be highlighted. More than 200,000 Venezuelans have arrived in Brazil, though around half of them have already left. Some have requested temporary visas, based on the Migration Law, and between January 2017 and August 2020, 54,167 Venezuelans claimed for asylum in Brazil, with 46,343 being granted refugee status, after three historic CONARE virtual meetings, in December 2019, April 2020, and August 2020, which granted *prima facie* recognition of their refugee status, collectively. (ACNUR 2020, Brazil CONARE 2020).

Lastly, there is the case of internal environmentally displaced persons (internal EDPs) in Brazil. Several cases of internal EDPs have occurred in the country over centuries. Two recent cases worth mentioning are the Mariana Dam disaster, on 5 November 2015, and the Brumadinho Dam disaster, on 25 January 2019. As a result, many villages were devastated by floods of mud, forcing the displacement of many families and, hence, creating a local humanitarian crisis, in addition to the socio-economic crisis.

In these cases of the Mariana and Brumadinho Dams, the Brazilian government only adopted institutional emergency measures, for instance, availability of the Brazilian Armed Forces to support the search for people and corpses, early payment of social programmes (i.e. Bolsa Familia), emergency situation recognition, through Legal Order n.222/2015, and delivery of R$9 million added to the national budget for emergency measures' adoption in Minas Gerais state (Portal Brasil, 2015), for those affected EDPs.

Unfortunately, in both cases, companies did not have a contingency plan or evacuation routes in the event of dam failure, preventing the evacuation

of more local people in a safe and timely way. Additionally, they have not yet compensated EDPs properly for damage and loss which occurred, and they, and the Brazilian government, were not internationally held responsible for the accident (for instance by monitoring, investigation, prevention, or national laws application). Most families are still without any kind of compensation, for instance housing, jobs or healthcare.

As observed in the above-mentioned cases, there have been discrepancies, among actors and levels, within the Brazilian government regarding legal and policy protection to conventional refugees (i.e. Syrians and Congolese) and other forced migrants, such as the Ganese internally displaced by the Mariana and Brumadinho Dams disasters, and the Haitians, international environmentally displaced people (EDPs), all called 'survival migrants' by Betts (2010). Hence, this is confirmation of the existence of a hybrid regime of protection of displaced persons within Brazilian Territory.

Particularly regarding the rights of populations affected by the dams disasters, Bill 2,788/2019, already approved by the Federal Chamber of Deputies and waiting for approval at the Senate (dated 26 May 2022), "attends in good part to the demands of popular movements, constituting an advance in normative terms. In the case it is approved and becomes law, it has the potential to serve as an important instrument in the realization of human rights" (Homa 2020, 13).

In a Brazilian scenario of socio-environmental disasters which lead to unequal negotiations between those affected populations and economically powerful enterprises, a specific law that institutes a national policy for these environmentally displaced people affected would likely be a first step to creating a national legal and policy framework to protect internally displaced people in Brazil.

Particularly regarding internal EDPs in Brazil, according to the Igarapé Institute (2018), there were 7.7 million IDPs (4% of the Brazilian population) between 2000 and 2017, comprising six million affected by disasters such as dams, hydro-electric plants, and roads. First, the Brazilian Movement of Dam Affected People (MAB), wrote in 2018 that there had been one million displaced people during the last 40 years in Brazil, as a result of 2,000 dams being built to supply water and produce energy. However, more than 70% of affected people have had their rights denied by building companies.

Second, the 2014 FIFA World Cup displaced more than 170,000 people. Third, the Belo Monte Hydro-electric Plant disaster displaced more than 20,000 people, in addition to the indigenous population. Fourth, regarding natural disasters, sudden floods, between 1992 and 2000 displaced more

than 10 million, and slow onset floods displaced more than five million people in the Northeast region.

Fifth, it should be noted that the man-made disasters at the two dams already mentioned were in the state of Minas Gerais (both belong to Vale do Rio Doce company) In the city of Mariana, in November 2015, the first directly affected more than 320,000 people and is considered to be the biggest environmental disaster in Brazilian history. The second occurred in the city of Brumadinho, in January 2019, and is recognised as the second biggest dam rupture in the world, having counted 206 deaths, 102 disappearances, 306 rescues, 395 located, and more than 40 thousand affected. It was considered to be an industrial, humanitarian, and environmental disaster.

According to the Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre (2019), in 2018, there were 86,000 IDPs in Brazil, 17.2 million of whom were newly displaced by disasters. However, the American continent only counted for 1.687 million (9.8% of the total amount). Additionally, in 2019, the same source (IDMC 2020) published that nearly 1,900 disasters triggered 33.4 million new internal displacements across 145 countries and territories, including Brazil. That is three times the number of displacements caused by conflict and violence.

Within Brazil, the IDMC (2020) has counted 295,000 new displacements through more than 500 disasters (mostly floods and landslides), totalling 1,400 IDPs. The report also mentions the following: "We also obtained figures for slow-onset phenomena such as drought and coastal erosion, which revealed 6,100 and 240 displacements respectively". This means that internal displacements by drought have almost been excluded from the figures, probably because the Brazilian discourse does not call them forced migrants to avoid the government being held responsible by international bodies. Brazil has obligations to fulfil through international treaties, but, in the case of internally displaced persons (IDPs) through disasters, the government is silent, and hides under the shadow of lack of published data.

Hence, lastly, regarding drought, between 2011 and 2013/2014, the worst drought for the last 50 years, having drastically affected 1,415 municipalities (more than 90% of municipalities of the semi-arid region), and almost 22 million people, which means 85% of the Brazilian poor (Agencia Brasil 2013). A couple of years before, the Ministry of Environment (Brazil 2007) published that between 1991 and 2000, there were more than a million environmentally displaced persons within Brazil.

There is not, however, any legal definition or any consensual concept, internationally or nationally, of environmentally displaced people, but only concepts which are used differently by international, regional, or national

agencies, experts and scholars. El-Hinnawi (1985) was the first expert to coin the term 'environmental refugee', in reference to those people who leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of environmental disruption (natural and/or man-made) which jeopardises their existence and/or quality of life. For El-Hinnawi, environmental change was the major reason, but not the only one. Secondly, in 1995, Myers also referred to environmental refugees as those who flee urgently for survival because of drought, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation, etc. In this sense, Black (1998 and 2001) also referred to environmental refugees as those who flee due to many reasons, environmental change being the main one.

Following the above trends, in 1998, the United Nations published the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, conceptualising Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as those who leave their places of residence, without crossing an internationally recognised border, as a result of, or in order to avoid, among other things, human rights violations or natural or man-made disasters. Although these do not constitute a legally binding treaty, IDPs began to be more visible and, for instance, the International Refugee Regime opened its doors to assist IDPs, after being authorised by the UN General Assembly.

With the need to find a consensual concept worldwide, Wood (2001) coined the term 'ecomigrant', in which he put together environmental and economic causes, including displaced persons, to explore natural resources. However, international agencies have not used this term, alleging confusion with 'economic migrants', who are voluntary migrants.

Moving from the use of the word 'refugee', already legally defined by the 1951 Convention of Refugees, Castles (2005) started to use the term 'environmental migrant', followed by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which conceptualised environmental migrants in 2007, as voluntary or forced migrants, temporarily or permanently, as a result of sudden or gradual change, for survival. This concept, in the same sense as those above mentioned, recognises the multi-causality of departure from the point of origin. In the same sense, Zetter (2010) coined the term 'environmentally displaced persons', referring to those who flee internally or internationally, temporarily or permanently, voluntarily or forcedly, for different reasons, for instance, economic, political, and/or social factors. However, environmental change is the main one.

Finally, Betts (2010) has chosen the term 'survival migrants' to refer to those persons who have crossed the borders of their country of origin due to threats for which they have not access to a national remedy or solution, such as environmental change, as different from what happens to refugees, whose

international legal regime protects them anywhere. Hence, these persons flee due for many combined reasons, environmental change being one of them, no matter whether or not it is associated with climate change.

Having said that, this author has adopted the term 'internal environmentally displaced persons' (internal EDPs) to refer to those people forced to move within their country of residence, temporarily or permanently, in search of survival, due to environmental factors of change (natural, sudden or gradual, man-made, or mixed) that makes local survival impossible. It should be noted that environmental change is the main trigger for this displacement, but other causes, for instance, political, economic, and social, may also be included.

According to the above-mentioned concepts, desertification and drought are considered major causes for the existence of internal EDPs from the Brazilian Northeast. This situation, also characterised by state omission, exacerbates human rights violations (i.e. increase of house rental, income loss, lack of education, and healthcare), inequalities, health problems, conflict, violence, and human insecurity (Castles 2005, Zetter, Boano e Morris 2008, Lackzo, Aghazam 2009, Leckie 2009, Homer-Dixon 2003). According to the 2014 UNCC Report (2014, 9):

> …it is estimated that 135 million people are at risk of being displaced by desertification. [...]. For poor people, migration is a complex and costly venture. Often, it is the last option in the bid to survive, but many poor people have little choice but to flee their lands. Losing productive land is driving people to make risky life choices. In rural areas where people depend on scarce productive land resources, land degradation is a driver of forced migration. With livelihoods coming under tremendous pressure, people with few options for survival can feel trapped. Unless we change the way we manage our land, in the next 30 years we may leave a billion or more vulnerable poor people with little choice but to fight or flee.

In the same sense, 2020 OCHA Report (United Nations 2020, 14) has published that drought "may cause significant environmental, health and socio-economic problems for affected populations". The report also includes same examples of the impacts of drought in the Latin American and the Caribbean regions, as follows: "damage to or loss of crops negatively affecting agriculture-based livelihoods; depletion of food stocks and malnutrition; shortages of water for drinking and basic sanitation; and forced migration caused by acute food insecurity and a lack of economic opportunity".

The Report also highlights that, "Brazil ranks high on the list of populations most affected by recurring climatic shocks, particularly droughts and floods types of environmental degradation processes".

Accordingly, droughts, such as the intermittent droughts that usually occur in Northeast Brazil, are slow-onset natural disasters (that emerge gradually over time) characterised as serious disruptions to the functioning of a community or a society, involving widespread human, material, economic, and environmental losses and impacts, which make it impossible for the affected community or society to cope using its own resources (United Nations 2020). These are different from desertification processes, which are slow-onset man-made disasters.

However, although concepts of disaster displacement, i.e. situations in which people are forced to leave as a result of disasters (Platform on Disaster Displacement 2020) exist, Ramos et al. (2020) emphasise that there is no legal definition of disaster displacement in the Brazilian legal order, and "the national data collection system in place does not include a category that fully reflects the particularities of displacement situations, hindering the identification and monitoring of disaster displacement cases in the country", making internal EDPs invisible in Brazil and abroad.

Hence, internal EDPs from the Backlands of the Brazilian Northeast, the driest part of the country, are the focus of this research, which gives a brief historical overview of the so-called "industry of drought" in the region, followed by some peculiarities of these Backlands, patterns of local migration (migratory flows), pull and push factors related to their existence, and the reasons for consensually categorising them, in addition to evaluating some regional and national laws, policies, and good practices (characterised in Chapter Six) in internal EDPs' protection worldwide.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE 'INDUSTRY OF DROUGHT' IN THE BRAZILIAN NORTHEAST

Forced migration (also called forced displacement) is the worst consequence of the intermittent and endless drought which characterises the Backlands of Brazil's Northeast, and is usually said to be, according to Albuquerque Junior, a regional problem (1995, 111). However, it has not always been so, as it was only during the 'big drought' between 1877 and 1879 that it became a national impact problem, killing around 13.9% of the population in Ceara state alone (the 1825 drought killed around 14%) and around 4% of the Northeastern population, capturing public interest and provoking state intervention. Villa, who compares the number of deceased with the Holocaust, estimates that around three million people died as victims of drought during the 19th and 20th Centuries in Brazil's Northeast (2000, 13).

According to the 2013 Brazilian Atlas of Natural Disaster (CEPED 2013, 42-44), there were 19,517 official droughts in Brazil between 1991 and 2012, that is, 48% of the 39,837 disasters in the country in the period. Out of this total, 56.68% occurred in the Northeast region, affecting more than 41,255,291 people. Pallone (2020) has emphasised that in 2019 alone, out of 3,982 natural disasters officially recorded in Brazil, 1,347 were drought-related (49.02%) and 869 were due to prolonged drought (31.62%), affecting more than 30,000 people: 58 injured, 12,656 dead, 5,391 unsheltered, 16,065 ill, 758 dislodged (houses destroyed, but not in need of temporary shelter), and 31,037,931 classified as "other affected".

Drought, which means "the naturally occurring phenomenon that exists when precipitation has been significantly below normal recorded levels, causing serious hydrological imbalances that adversely affect land resource production systems" (UNCCD, article 1, c), is a multidimensional problem. Those droughts which occur in the Backlands of Brazil's Northeast have several causes, however all of them force the local population to migrate, mainly from rural areas to urban municipalities, for instance, state capitals on the coast, or to the Southeast, where Sao Paulo is located, and which is the most industrialised part of the country.

It should be noted, according to Nys, Engle, and Magalhães (2016, 19), that aridity drought and water shortage drought are different events. The former is a permanent characteristic of a dry climate, whilst the latter is a climate deviation after a long time. The former is a natural phenomenon, and the latter occurs when, for instance, humans use more water than is naturally available. Both may contribute to desertification, that is, environmental degradation of land which is more or less permanent in semi-arid and dried sub-humid areas. Both exist in the Northeast of Brazil, a region also subject to the impacts of climate change.

In fact, precipitation in Brazil`s Northeast does not show a definite change trend: there may be significant reductions or moderated increase. However, the increase of the global temperature has an important effect on evaporation, which may damage storage efficiency in the lakes. Hence, the risk of natural disasters, such as droughts, must be evaluated along with other concepts, for instance the population`s exposition and vulnerability, early warning systems, local action plans and coordination and contingency plans, in order to avoid huge impacts of drought, for instance, a high number of diseases, material losses, and deaths (Brazil 2013, 12 and 20).

Historically, for Andrade (1986, 126), in the 16th century, foreign settlers started to populate the region by using livestock in the sugar mills, and hence, deforestation began as a means of providing more access to land for cattle. Caatinga vegetation (a Brazilian biome) was the only type to survive, though it had to be burnt annually when the first rain came, so that the green shoots would sprout and the cattle would have food. Local people had to build subsistence agriculture in small oases of humid spaces to survive. They supplied themselves with cassava, corn, beans, and sugar cane. In the 18th century, the Industrial Revolution demanded cotton culture, which developed in association with corn, beans, and sugar-cane subsistence cultures, provoking more natural vegetation devastation and environmental degradation.

Droughts have been constant in the Backlands of Brazil's Northeast since the 16th Century, when they led to large-scale migration of indigenous people to the coast. The first record of drought in the region dates back to 1559, when a priest, Serafim Leite, referred to drought in the Bahia state, and in 1587, another priest, Fernão Cardim, recorded drought in Bahia and Pernambuco states (CGEE 2016, 34). Droughts have also been observed by Brazilian Constitutions, for instance (CGEE 2016, 34-37):

- The 1824 Brazilian Constitution provided a budget for public aid for the population in situations of emergency, This included "the plague

of drought", and the possibility to build emergency works to provide jobs for the victims of drought;
- The 1834 Additional Act gave competency to state Parliaments to legislate on public aid cases;
- The 1934 Constitution gave the Union competence to organise a permanent defense against the effects of drought, with a systematic plan to face the problem of drought and specific budget for assistance work;
- The 1937 Constitution was the only one not to address the issue of drought, probably due to the dictatorship regime installed with it;
- The 1946 Constitution established the execution of a defense plan against Northeastern drought, with at least 3% of the federal budget for economic and social works and assistance services.
- 1967 Constitutional Act and 1969 Constitution gave the Union competence to organise defense against drought and infra-constitutional law to regulate agricultural use in lands susceptible to disaster; and
- The current 1988 Constitution created the Constitutional Financing Fund for the Northeast, with the aim of contributing to the social and economic development of the region.

Finally, in 2015, the National Parliament created the National Policy to Combat Desertification and to Mitigate the Effects of Drought, through Law n.13,153, with a national commission to combat desertification, in order not only to prevent and combat desertification, but also to recover areas in processes of land degradation across the whole country. Despite these Constitutional provisions, the dilemma has remained, local people have been left without assistance, and displacement for survival, has persisted, though in lower numbers, particularly because resources are diverted to reinforce the 'Industry of Drought'.

It should be noted that there are two types of drought in Brazil's Northeast: annual droughts, which last between seven and eight months and are not considered a huge problem, as *sertanejos* (local people) are already adapted to it and they have enough water reservoirs for the period, and intermittent droughts, which are unpredictable and usually occur within the rainy season (December to March). The latter can last from seven months to four years. Famous droughts with huge negative consequences which provoked large numbers of migrants occurred in the following periods: 1788-1790, 1877-1880, 1915-1919, 1932, 1951-1953, 1958, 1970, 1979-1984, 2011-2017 (Andrade 1986, 126, CGEE 2016, 169). According to Melo (2017), there were 130 droughts in the Backlands of the Brazilian

Northeast between the 15th and the 21st centuries, though different historians point out different data:

- 4 droughts in the 16th century: the best and the rainiest;
- 9 droughts in the 17th century: the start of the driest century already recorded;
- 38 droughts in the 18th century: the driest century;
- 23 droughts in the 19th century: century marked for reduction of droughts;
- 42 droughts in the 20th century: the worst century regarding drought records and the second driest in history; and
- 14 droughts in the 21st century: the predictions are it will be the driest century in history.

For Nys, Engle, and Magalhães (2016, 25), droughts in the Brazilian semi-arid region belong to the region's culture (its history, music, literature, religiosity, etc.). However, for them (2016, 23), their causes are with the climate: El Niño and the Atlantic Ocean surface temperature strongly influence the climate in the Northeast (a climate border region), causing less rain over many months and evapotranspiration due to flat soil. Hence, "human activities need to adapt themselves to the semi-arid conditions and not the opposite". This means that when a drought ends, for instance, agricultural production and the livestock industry increase, and local people forget its bad effects, until a new drought comes again.

Droughts' main effects have been the drying up of reservoirs and desiccation of plants, elimination of cattle from hunger or disease, destruction of local trade, and forced migration of local people, who abandon everything they are not able to carry in their hands, and head for areas favourable to their survival, such as state capitals and big cities. This situation always leads to disorganisation of the regional economy, and families' impoverishment, and brings serious security and health problems for the government.

The impacts of drought are not only environmental (animals' deaths, water shortages, environmental degradation, and desertification), but also economic (after losing agricultural harvests and animals), social (unemployment, hunger, death, and forced displacement), and political (local social relations depend on the unequal political relations) (Nys, Engle, and Magalhães 2016, 23, 25-31).

Albuquerque Junior (1995, 118) calls attention to the fact that drought deepens the elites' economic and political crisis, breaks traditional social relations, and, hence, leads to violent conflicts which threaten order, due to

the fact that "it makes clear the most cruel face of these relationship(s) of exploration and domination".

Unfortunately, government aid has been useless since then. During colonial times (16th to 17th century), there were no public policies to combat drought in Brazil. Albuquerque Junior (1995, 112-114) emphasises that during Imperial times (1822-89), when Brazil's Northeast suffered the 1877-1879, drought, it resulted in an economic crisis in the region, which led to a decline in the price of sugar and cotton exportation, as well as the loss of slaves to the South. For instance, there were no elections or compulsory military service in 1878, as local people had migrated. Therefore, the provincial local elite "suffered from a progressive loss of national political space and faced a new power division among themselves". Drought again exacerbated the social and economic crisis, as *sertanejos* were pushed to absolute misery, public philanthropy, withdrawal, and migration to the coast, where local and national governments gave them food.

On one hand, those migrants brought cheap labour for sugar production, but on the other hand, social tension increased, as did epidemics, insecurity, and change in dominant customs (i.e. increases in prostitution, shoplifting, and crimes of death were all associated with migrants). Andrade (1986, 127) stresses that a useless commission was created to study the causes of drought and the measures to be taken to mitigate its impact. However, without political will, nothing changed.

Albuquerque Junior (1995, 115) points out that some "Brazilian Robin Hood[s]" appeared at that time, invading towns and villages and stealing from the wealthier population as a last and desperate means for survival. As a result, owners of large estates left for provincial capitals and used their political influence to get public jobs until the end of the drought. In fact, they lived by diverting public funds that were allocated to mitigate the impact of local drought, as still happens to in the region.

With the rise of the Republic (1889), local power began to have more influence in the federal sphere and to pressure it to develop a permanent public policy to combat the effects of drought. Many governmental bodies have been created since then, such as SUDENE (Superintendence of Northeast Development) and CODEVASF (Sao Francisco River Valley Development Company), but the problem has remained, mainly due to endemic corruption, which characterises the region and makes it impossible to develop a useful social and economic policy.

In effect, political corruption is rife in Brazil, and has been firmly embedded at every level of the Brazilian state (municipal, state, and federal), in public and private sectors. Brazil increased its place in the global corruption ranking, reaching number 105 out of 180 evaluated countries in

2018, and, additionally, scoring 35 out of 100, that is, Brazil's worst score since 2012 (Borges 2019). Anything below 50th place is considered extremely serious.

Large estates` owners and businesspeople, who constitute the local and corrupted elite, have lost wealth with the drought, and, hence, divert public funds intended to assist the local population affected by drought, who then have to migrate for survival. Consequently, only the local elite have benefitted from these policies, creating the so called "industry of drought". Even the Catholic Church has closed its eyes to the deviation of public funds. Rios (2002, 110-5) states that, during the drought of 1932, in Ceara state, for instance, the local elite used to make philanthropic gestures and take part in Catholic programmes, such as bingos, balls, sporting and cultural events, music concerts, and dance performances. Even the carnival, considered a pagan party, was allowed by the Church. Therefore, migrant control arose and migrants who arrived in Fortaleza, the state capital, were confined through humanitarian and religious practices (the church discourse was that they should conform to poverty, like Jesus who was born poor), as well as the dominant social and political elite, who stated "the big problem would be spiritual poverty not material shortage".

According to Andrade (1986, 128), it was only during the drought of 1952 that the government came to believe that the dilemma of drought was not only an issue of water, or a physical problem, but was also a social and political one. During the drought of 1958, the Brazilian economist Celso Furtado, apud Andrade (1986, 127) affirmed "the basic problem of [the] Northeast was not of physical order, but it was derived from the political and social structure that did not adapt the economy and local society to face the impact of drought". Another measure was the creation of concentration camps during the droughts of 1932 and 1979-84 to prevent local people from migrating, and to force them to work on public projects, such as building bridges, roads, and dams.

They were financially exploited, under severe vigilance, in favour of urban development, and public funds were given to local landowners to manage them, though the latter used to keep a huge amount for themselves. Rios (2002, 116-118) emphasises that despite the desire to control migration, the concentration camp scheme largely failed, and poor migrants reached the capital, bringing poverty, starvation, their lack of skills, violent conflict, and a huge sense of hope. The media also exacerbated feelings of anger in the government and local elite against migrants, who were, in the end, exploited at work, often sent to prison several times (begging was a crime in some states) and sent to live in ghettos in a form of racist social apartheid. For Albuquerque Junior (1995, 117), the media could show the

local elite and members of Parliament how drought could be a dilemma which was able to mobilise local and national public opinion. Consequently,

> …drought nationalisation as a problem arises as a result of the Northern local elites' discourses in the media and in the Parliament, under the impact of changes which were eliminating their economic and political power, making them adopt this new strategy of victims of nature.

In short, the politicisation of drought has become the elite's strategy since the 18th century in Brazil's Northeast, by serving as a basis for maintaining the privileges of an elite who are not economically important to Brazil anymore. Asfour (2020, 19), in research on law and policy related to IDPs in the Middle East, has also identified the same protection gaps in existing regional and national policies, which challenge IDPs from achieving their rights and protecting them. Accordingly, the role of 'political will' and 'state accountability' are also significant factors strongly associated with the actualisation of IDPs rights. Research has also shown how displacement can be politicised and used by states to gain power".

Wall`s (2000) hypothesis that democracy prevents famine, that is, civil and political rights (free speech, free association, and free and direct elections) leads to social and economic rights (right to food and livelihood) protection, suits the Brazilian case. For him (2000, 3), there is "no famine in democracies", that is, political democracies, with their democratic process, mechanisms, and institutions, may prevent or, at least, struggle against, famine (i.e. hunger, impoverishment, social breakdown, mortality, and resilience).

Wall (2000, 11) identifies negative and positive examples of government interventions to end famine: positive outcomes are the 1880 India`s famine code to prevent mass deaths from famine and Botswana`s efficient drought relief policy between the 1970s and 1990s, whilst the negative outcomes are the liberal institutions' failures of Bangladesh in 1974 and 1986-8 Sudan in 1986-8 to prevent famine. However, Wall also emphasised that the negative outcomes are exceptions, for instance, in Bangladesh, "the institutions were democratic and liberal in name only" and, in Sudan, "the affected population were not regarded as full citizens of the country by the government or by the most vocal and influential citizens" (Wall 2000, 11). In the same sense, Rathod (2020, 15-16) highlights that,

> ..in Latin American and the Caribbean, numerous underlying vulnerabilities can lay the groundwork for environmental forces, and ultimately lead to displacement. […], drought-induced resource scarcity might lead to ethnic or political tensions, contributing to conflict, weakened governments, and in turn, migration (Perry 2011, 3-4).