



Special and Political Decolonization Committee

Topic 2: The question of the Venezuelan diaspora

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1. Definition of key terms

Diaspora: consists in a group of people, who decide to leave its native country because of political, religious and economic issues and migrate to another one.

Populist policy: a collection of ideas and proposal concerning a particular situation, that have been implemented by the government of a country or a political party. A populist policy refers to the require of represent the ideas and the opinions of the population.

Bolivarianism: is a set of ideas against injustices of imperialism, corruption and inequality; this movement was founded by Hugo Chavez named after Simon Bolivar, a Venezuelan leader that managed to free his country from the Spanish monarchy.

To seek asylum: To ask protection in another nation, since the person concerned was forced to leave his native country and cannot return.

Brain drain: when a significant group of educated people, or scholars, or skilled labourers leave their country and fled to another one economically more stable.

Adjustment of status: is the process used by someone who lives in the USA thanks to a visa and that wants to apply for lawful permanent resident status, without returning to his own country.

2. Introduction

The Bolivarian diaspora consists in the emigration of millions of Venezuelans from their country, because of the Bolivarian Revolution implemented by the president Hugo Chávez and later Nicolás Maduro. The Revolution, whose aim was to make Venezuela a cultural and political hegemony, failed due to the unsuccessful populist policies and it also caused the worst economic crisis in Venezuela's history. As a result, over four millions Venezuelans had left the country since 1999 in the face of a total population of about 31 millions. The most affected nations by this migratory phenomenon are not only the Venezuela's neighbouring countries such as Colombia, Peru and Argentina that are currently suffering from a refugee crisis, but also Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, USA, Canada and Panama.

3. Background information

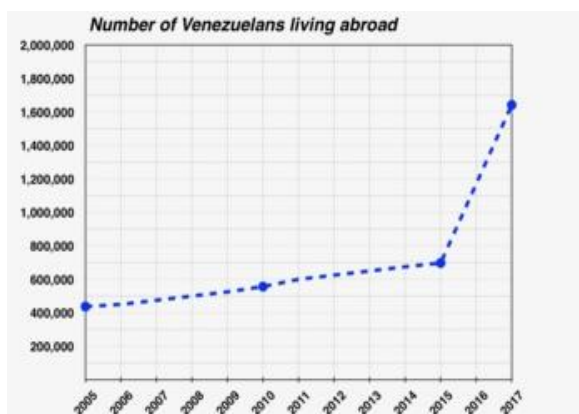
History

When the Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez was firstly elected in 1999, all his political measures were aimed at building an inter-American coalition in order to implement Bolivarianism; as a supporter of the Latin American revolutionary leader Simon Bolivar, he was focused on achieving independence of South America from Spanish rules.

In that year, only 14 Venezuelans had the right to seek asylum in the United States, until the end of September 1999 when the number of people who were granted asylum rose to 1,086, despite the several promises of redistribute wealth among poor people made by the President.

On April 2002, the President Hugo Chavez was ousted from office for 47 hours due to a coup d'état attempt; however, he managed to restore his power thanks to military force and popular support and from that moment on, there had been some years of political tension, that culminated in Chavez's rise to power. Another wave of Venezuelan people fled from the Bolivarian government in those years because of the economic and political instability, especially those who had relatives or links in other countries.

The migratory situation continued worsening, due to the Chavez re-election in 2006. It has been estimated, that more than one million citizens emigrated between 1999 and 2009. When Hugo Chavez died in 2013, his Minister of Foreign Affairs Nicolas Maduro was elected President of Venezuela. During his presidency, Venezuela has experienced an increase of



crime, inflation, poverty and hunger, although he has repeatedly blamed an “economic war” waged by his political opponents. Furthermore, Maduro has not only been accused of authoritarian leadership, but he is also considered a full-fledged dictator. Not surprisingly between 2012 and 2015, another migration wave, composed of people who were experiencing hunger because of the country's economic crisis, occurred.

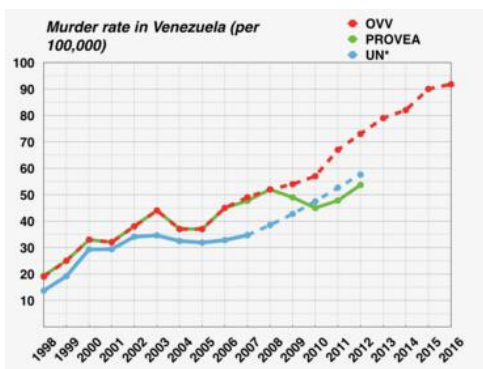
The president Nicolas Maduro was re-elected in May 2018; living standards are not improving

and the migratory phenomenon has not stopped, given the fact that Venezuelan citizens keep thinking that Maduro's policies would not change. The number of people who fled from Venezuela since the beginning of the Revolution in 1999 is now up to 3 millions, almost 10 percent of the overall population.

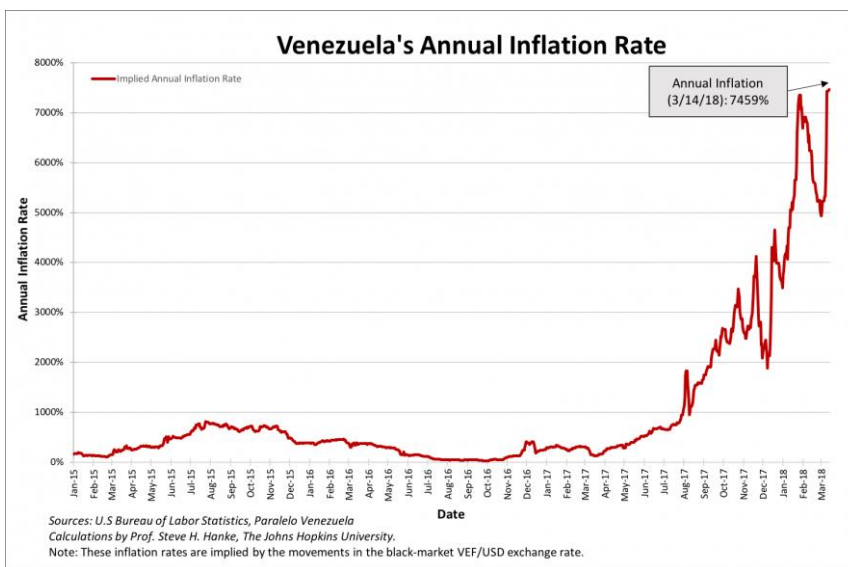
Causes

At the bottom of the Bolivarian diaspora there are several factors that led to the deterioration of the living standards of the country and that forced citizens to migrate.

First of all, one of the primary causes that has to be considered is the lack of freedom among citizens and the political repression implemented by Chavez, since he did not accept any form of dissent.



Moreover, even the high level of insecurity plays a key role in migration: the crime rate in Venezuela has indeed increased over the years, due to the minimal gun control and also an ineffective judicial system. During Chavez and then Maduro's presidency, the murder rate has risen from 25% to 82% from 1999 to 2014.



Another fundamental cause for migration is economy. After some government policies, including the imposition of severe currency controls in 2003, shortages started spreading all over the country, with the result that people had to beg for food or even search it in trash in order not to starve. Another consequence of Chavez's

economic policy was the inflation: nowadays Venezuela has the World's highest inflation rate, reaching even the 100 percent in 2015.

Effects

The Bolivarian diaspora also affected the education, because of the high number of young students or educated professionals who emigrated in order not only to avoid the Venezuela's crime rate, but also to find a country with better living standards, where they could implement their capability and earn a higher salary. In this case, the migration caused the so-

called “brain drain”: it has been estimated that 1.5 million emigrants were college graduates, including a 40% of people who had a master's degree and a 12% of doctorates.

On the other hand, there are children who are forced to leave prematurely school, in order to work and contribute in increasing the economic status of the family.

The economy of Venezuela has certainly suffered and is suffering in numerous ways. In fact, the country is experiencing an economic crisis not only because of inflation and shortage, but also because all the businesspeople, accountants and administrators, who had the possibility to leave Venezuela and decided to emigrate.

Moreover, Venezuela is one of the largest producers of petroleum and its economy is mostly based on it; however, even in this field was registered a crisis, since most of the former oil engineers moved to Canada or in the North Sea due to the price controls and foreign exchange controls. As a result, Venezuelan oil production decreased, while work-related injuries increased.

4. Major countries involved



The countries with the major numbers of Venezuelan migrants are mainly those that confine with Venezuela, especially Colombia, Brazil, Peru and Argentina, because they are more easily reachable. Nevertheless, a substantial part of migrants fled also to the USA, Italy, Portugal, Spain, France, Panama and Canada.

Colombia

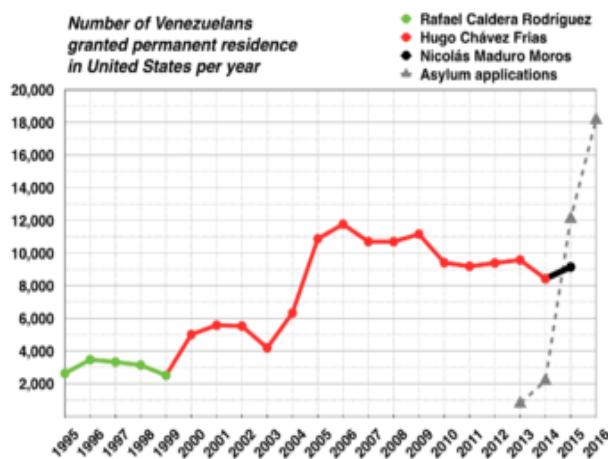
Colombia has always adopted an admission policy and it has always accepted Venezuelan migrants, even when the borders between the two countries were closed, due to the Venezuela-Colombia migrant crisis. Furthermore, Colombian government has not only given the refugees a legal status, but it has also provided free assistance such as public education for children.

However, when the borders between the two countries were officially reopened in 2016, the situation worsened: the number of people who were seeking asylum was so elevated that the government had difficulties in helping those people, even because they were extremely poor.

As a result, the country began deporting unauthorized migrants by the end of 2016. By the end of August 2017, Venezuelan people who managed to migrate to Colombia were almost one million. In the same year, the Colombian government granted a Special Permit of Permanence to Venezuelan migrants who would legally enter the country before 2nd February in order to provide them a work, a study and a social status.

Colombian economy was for sure affected by that migratory wave, especially the oil industry that had hired several skilled Venezuelan engineers. Nowadays, however, Colombia can no more deal with the huge amount of people who attempt to cross the border and for this reason the government decided to increase controls and decrease the entrances by 30%.

United States of America



Another common destination for Venezuelan migrants is the USA, that have repeatedly confirmed their opponent position towards the Venezuelan government: when Maduro was firstly elected, the American government prohibited him from entering the country because he was considered a dictator.

The U.S. have accommodated almost 260,00 Venezuelans by the end of 2015, although it has been estimated that

there are almost 500,000 of them who actually lived in the country with a non-immigrant visa. For this reason, in 2015 the Venezuelan Refugee Assistance Act was introduced by the U.S. representative Carlos Curbelo. It consists in a bill, according to which a specific refugee that was currently living in the USA had the right to ask for an adjustment of status, in order to avoid to be deported in his native country.

Nonetheless, nowadays the American rules are getting stricter, due to Trump's aggressive policy, and the majority of asylum requests are being rejected. As a result, Venezuelans are forced to return to Venezuela or to seek asylum in other countries.

Argentina

There are currently more than 40,000 Venezuelans that live in Argentina, although it is not one of the main destinations among them, essentially because of the distance between the two country and the expensive price of the plane fare.

Due to their poverty, Venezuelan refugees prefer migrating in a neighbouring country; on the contrary, while those who have enough financial resources tend to fled to a richer country rather than Argentina.

Brazil

The Venezuelan refugees' situation in Brazil is fragile, considering that around 800



Venezuelans try to enter the country daily. The country has serious difficulties in managing this huge flow of people, because Brazilian cities have neither the adequate resources and the facilities capable of helping all people. Furthermore, some of the Venezuelan migrants actually travel by foot or on ship, exploiting the Amazon basin. The emergency consists in the fact that they also pay an excessive amount of money in order to be smuggled into large cities.

That is why the Brazilian government has recently decided to strengthen the military forces on the border between the two countries, where several schools have been built in order to give Venezuelan children an education.

Caribbean islands

In order to limit the entrance of Venezuelan migrants, the islands of Aruba and Curaçao have decided to impose a considerable tax to be paid before entering the country and they have also increased deportation and controls. Nevertheless, some Venezuelans annually manage to settle there, where they mainly work in the tourism industry.

Another common destination are the islands of Trinidad and Tobago, where until May 2016 there were 14,000 Venezuelans living there, including some who had overstayed the visa. The two islands are beneficial to the migrants, because of their stable economy and their border with eastern Venezuela even though, once they get there, they often remain unemployed.

5. Un Involvement

In November 2018, the United Nations and their partners managed to earn US\$220 million in order to help 406,000 people in need across Peru, Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia, along with the \$17.2 million distributed by the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). Moreover, in September 2018 a humanitarian response plan has been launched by the UN and now this plan is led by all the countries involved, in order to provide essential goods.

For example, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has distributed in September hygiene, domestic, and kitchen kits to several Venezuelans in Brazil and also water purification tablets in Ecuador. In the same month, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Peru has provided almost 2,000 baby kits to Venezuelans living in Tumbes. By the end of September 2018, World Food Programme (WFP) has distributed hot meals, prepaid cards for the purchase of foods, food kits and school meals to Venezuelan refugees in Colombia and Ecuador.



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6. Useful links

https://everipedia.org/wiki/lang_en/Bolivarian_diaspora/

<https://data2.unhcr.org/es/documents/download/66369>

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/11/1025231>

<https://www.un.org/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolivarian_diaspora#Intergovernmental_organizations