

Democratization



Year 1, Issue 4

The centipede game: *Chevron vs Rosneft*

Ángel Alvarado

The voice of the absent: the Venezuelan migration crisis and its consequences

Héctor Briceño

Socialist revolutions and law: Perceptions and thoughts

Rogelio Pérez Perdomo

The resilience of the Chavista Revolution

Juan Miguel Matheus

DECEMBER 2019

The voice of the absent: the Venezuelan migration crisis and its consequences

Héctor Briceño

“For a while the Ausreiser, the partisans of exit (Wir wollen raus –We want out), and the Bleiber, the partisans of voice (Wir bleiben hier– We’re stay here) form separate, even somewhat antagonistic, groups. Eventually they merge under the slogan “Wir sind das Volk” (We are the people)”¹.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at the end of 2019, it was estimated that around 4.6 million Venezuelans had left the country as a result of the social, economic and political crisis of recent years. Less than half of these had residence permits or similar issued by the welcoming countries, the rest being divided between various statuses that range from processing paperwork to illegal conditions².

The UNHCR also warned about the possible future of the crisis in a press release: “If current trends continue, 6.5 million

1 Albert Hirschman, “Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic: An Essay in Conceptual History”, *World Politics* 45 (1993): 173-202.

2 According to the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants of Venezuela, jointly led by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Venezuelans could be outside the country by the end of 2020”³, a prognosis that, if fulfilled, would displace 20% of all Venezuelan population.

In the following pages, we will address the main social, economic and political causes and consequences of the Venezuelan migration crisis, with special emphasis on its effects on the democratization process.

No single crisis in Venezuela

First, it is necessary to point out that in Venezuela there is no single crisis: there are several simultaneous and mutually intertwined crises that have built a vicious circle, in constant reproduction. The migration crisis is at the center of this circle, fed by and feeding the rest of the gears of the circuit. In this sense, the migratory crisis, as well as the humanitarian, political and economic crisis, have mutually reinforcing consequences that demand (and will demand during the transition process towards democracy) equally comprehensive responses. It is, in short, a complex systemic crisis.

In Venezuela, a deep social and humanitarian crisis has rapidly deteriorated the quality of life, plunging 94% of Venezuelans into poverty⁴ and leaving the most vulnerable populations totally helpless. This has transformed Venezuela into the most unequal

3 <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/11/5dcdb7284/us135-billion-needed-help-venezuelan-refugees-migrants-host-countries.html>

4 https://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-informe-asegura-94-porciento-venezolanos-vive-pobreza-201904101841_noticia.html; <https://elucabista.com/2018/11/30/se-incrementa-la-pobreza-venezuela-segun-resultados-preliminares-encovi-2018/>

country of the most unequal continent in the world⁵. According to the Latinobarometer survey, by 2018 the number of people who said that they did not have enough food to feed themselves reached 61%, while food specialists say that the number of children with malnutrition reached 33% of the child population under 5 years of age in 2019, many of whom accumulated irreversible damage that will affect their physical and mental performance for the rest of their lives⁶.

The shortage of medicines became normal for several years, allowing diseases eradicated in previous centuries such as malaria, paludism⁷, among others, to reappear and condemning the population to suffer from controllable diseases.

Social violence has also increased, led by "death squads", special police forces involved in thousands of extrajudicial executions according to the report published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachellet⁸.

The social crisis is intertwined with the profound economic crisis that has destroyed, after each cycle, the low income and consumption capacity of Venezuelan households. Cycles of shortages, inflation, hyperinflation, dollarization, hit one after the other, affecting the already deteriorated quality of life of Venezuelans.

5 <https://prodavinci.com/venezuela-es-el-pais-mas-desigual-del-continente-que-pasara-con-la-desigualdad-social-despues-del-17a/>

6 https://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-alrededor-300000-ninos-podrian-morir-desnutricion-venezuela-segun-caritas-201710250219_noticia.html

7 <http://www.accionsolidaria.info/website/alerta-enfermedades-erradicadas-reaparecen-en-venezuela/>

8 <https://www.ohchr.org/sp/newsevents/pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24788&LangID=S>

The dismantling of the country's productive capacity has increased dependence on imports in a country where the external debt represents more than 100% of the GDP⁹ and more than 450% of imports¹⁰, and in an economy that has lost around 65% of production in six years (2014-2019) according to estimates of the International Monetary Fund¹¹.

The Chavista economic model, in its aspiration for total control, transformed the Venezuelan economy into a large black market, in which the goods of greatest need are traded in unequal informal spaces, impervious to state control, characterized by their ambivalent property: clandestine and at the same time known by all.

Finally, the economic crisis deepens and intertwines with the deep political crisis that demolished the minimum consensus that precedes the “political game”, generating a pre-constitutional crisis, of the spirit of the laws or of what the political scientist Robert Dahl (1989) called the “shadow of political theory”: the fundamental assumptions and axioms that without being explicitly formulated are present and are shared by all the actors of a political system. In this sense, the Venezuelan political crisis can be defined as the total absence of institutions, which are

9 <http://www.dinero.com.ve/din/actualidad/la-deuda-externa-de-venezuela-es-229-superior-al-pib-de-este-o>; <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-46147607>

10 <http://especiales.prodavinci.com/deudaexterna/>

11 https://prodavinci.com/tras-seis-anos-de-caida-en-cuanto-se-redujo-el-tamano-de-la-economia-venezolana/?utm_source=Bolet%C3%ADn+diario+Prodavinci&utm_campaign=37c725ca08-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_01_20_10_45&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_02b7f11c26-37c725ca08-195304325; <https://www.efe.com/efe/america/economia/el-fmi-estima-que-la-economia-venezolana-se-contrara-mas-de-un-tercio-este-2019/20000011-4087638>

understood in their broad sociological sense as shared norms and values that allow making decisions that have validity and legitimacy for the entire community over which they govern.

Migration waves

In this complicated context, one might think that the migration crisis is only a rational consequence of the adverse Venezuelan scenario, an individual exit from a suffocating reality. However, the migration crisis is both a consequence and a cause: there is a two-way relationship between the migration crisis and the social, economic and political crisis. We do not wish to suggest that the migration crisis is the trigger for everything else, but rather to highlight the dynamic nature of the crisis in order to identify the complexity of the economic, political and social causes and consequences of the migration crisis, as well as its diverse national and international nature.

Although the Venezuelan migration crisis has become more noticeable since 2017, the truth is that migratory movements began shortly after the arrival of Chavism to power. Thus, at least three waves of migration can be identified¹², characterized according to their main causes, the profile of the migrant population and their main destinations, while still understanding the strictly analytical nature of the delimitation of migratory waves, since in reality all overlap one another.

12 This classification of migratory waves is based on the perspective of the country of departure (Venezuela). However, a different grouping can be identified from the point of view of the recipient country. This is reflected, for example, in this analysis of Venezuelan migrants who arrived on Colombia: <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/crisis-en-venezuela-migracion-historica-de-venezolanos-a-colombia/556758>

The first wave began after the arrival of Hugo Chávez to power, being even more intense during the troubled years from 2002 to 2005. This early wave of migration consists of some businessmen who saw Chavism as a threat to their investments. A significant percentage of the 20,000 workers of the state oil company Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) who were fired from their jobs after the 2002-2003 oil strike are also registered in this wave –highly qualified human resources out of which most were hired by oil companies from all regions of the world. According to the British news corporation BBC, it was estimated that by 2008 about 500 Venezuelan specialists were working in Colombian oil companies¹³.

Two additional political events affected this first wave. First, the establishment in February 2003 of the exchange control through the creation of the Currency Administration Commission (CADIVI) with the aim, among others, of preventing capital flight. Paradoxically, far from being stopped, it was actually encouraged¹⁴ thanks in part to the low transparency and lack of accountability of the regulatory mechanism, and also reinforced the early fears of the business class.

A second political event of significant impact on this first wave of migration was the institutionalization of the mechanism of political discrimination known as the “Tascón List”. The Tascón List was a database initially published through the website of the

13 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/spanish/business/newsid_7301000/7301947.stm

14 According to Jorge Giordani, planning minister (Feb-1999 to May-2002/ Apr-2003 to Jan-2008/Feb-2009 to Jun-2014) and one of the promoters of the exchange control “at least 25 billion US \$ had been stolen through the various exchange control mechanisms” <https://www.aporrea.org/actualidad/n225115.html>).

deputy co-founder of the Chavista MVR party¹⁵, Luis Tascón, which contained personal information of the citizens who, in 2003, requested a recall referendum against President Hugo Chávez. These signatures were collected through the National Electoral Council (CNE) and delivered to the government at the request of Hugo Chávez himself¹⁶, and then organized in a database that was used by the different public institutions to fire or prevent the hiring of personnel or services in State agencies who were on the list¹⁷.

After its publication at the beginning of 2004, multiple authorities of public institutions implemented the list. Perhaps the most prominent of all public expressions that supported this discriminatory policy was that of health minister Roger Capella in March 2004: "Signing against Chávez is an act of terrorism"¹⁸ to which he added: "Te only doctors who will provide services in

15 MVR, Movimiento V (Quinta) República, was the party founded by Hugo Chávez, among other political leaders of Chavismo, at the end of 1997 and facing the 1998 presidential elections. The MVR was the predecessor party of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and was dissolved after the foundation of the latter.

16 "I remember signing several days ago an Office sent to the National Electoral Council (CNE) requesting copies of all the forms submitted by the opposition. We are entitled to that" (own translation). Hugo Chávez, *Aló Presidente* Program 180, February 1, 2004. See: <http://todochavez.gob.ve/todochavez/4210-alo-presidente-n-180>

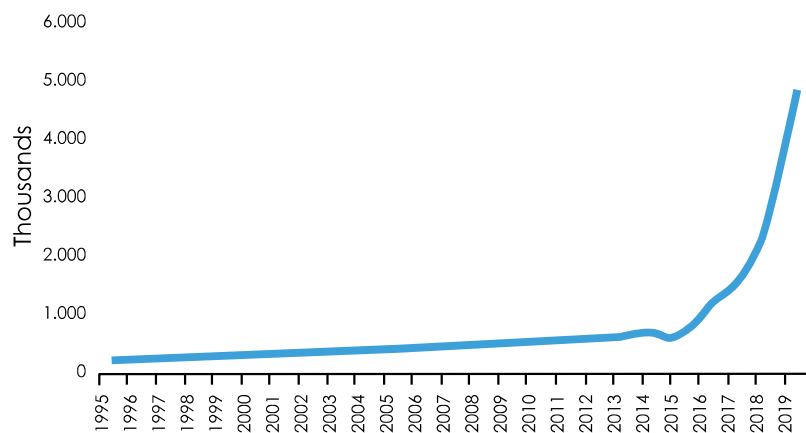
17 In October 2003, before the list was published, President Hugo Chávez himself warned that the information would be used and interpreted: "Those who sign against Chávez are not really signing against Chávez. They will be signing against their homeland" (own translation) (Human Rights Watch; 2008, 18).

18 http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/latin_america/newsid_3575000/3575729.stm

the hospital institutions of the country will be doctors committed with the revolutionary process” (Human Rights Watch; 2008, 20).

The first wave of migration was characterized, in addition to its professional nature and large capitals, by its diversity of destinations, which also include Colombia (for its geographical and cultural proximity¹⁹). and the United States (for its traditional commercial ties), as well as other countries geographically further away with high demands for specialized oil personnel.

Graph 1. Venezuelan migrant population 1995 – 2019



Source: International Organization for Migration, Migration Data Portal²⁰.

A second wave of migration is associated with the rise and fall of the “21st century socialism”, a political offer that made a formal

19 https://www.elnacional.com/opinion/columnista/diaspora-venezolana-tres-olas-migratorias-anos_262845/

20 https://migrationdataportal.org/?i=stock_abs_&t=2019

appearance in the Venezuelan context during 2006²¹ shortly before Hugo Chávez presented his candidacy for re-election in the presidential elections of the same year: “We have assumed the commitment to lead the Bolivarian Revolution towards socialism and to contribute (...) with a new socialism –a 21st century socialism”²².

The overwhelming victory of Hugo Chávez in these elections encouraged a new wave of migrants who fled before the imminent turn to socialism and its unquestionable authoritarian dimension, embodied in the constitutional reform proposal rejected in the 2007 referendum.

In this sense (and paradoxically), the electoral defeat of the proposal to constitutionalize the “21st century socialism” only served to reassert its authoritarian character, by imposing itself a short time later and against the will of the electorate through a set of laws promulgated by the president through the legislative powers assigned to him by the National Assembly on January 31, 2007, through an enabling law²³.

This second wave of migration was mainly composed of middle class professionals, but also by a large number of members of the Latin American and European immigrant communities

21 The first official mention of Hugo Chávez of the 21st century socialism was in 2005 in Brazil, during the Fifth World Social Forum (https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2013/04/130412_venezuela_mexico_heinz_dieterich_chavez_socialismo_siglo_xxi_jcps).

22 Own translation of the statement by President Hugo Chávez on May 13, 2006, at the Vienna City Sports Complex (Stadthalle, Wien), Australia. <http://todochavez.gob.ve/todochavez/3021-intervencion-del-comandante-presidente-hugo-chavez-en-el-acto-enlazando-alternativas-ii>

23 Valid until mid 2008: <https://www.sumate.org/parlamentario/8/gestion.html135>

settled in Venezuela after escaping the various conflicts that shook both continents during different decades of the 20th century. These mainly include the return of the Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Colombian, Chilean, among others.

The third wave began in 2013 and worsened between 2017-2019. It is preceded by the increase of repression and the deterioration of social and economic conditions, additionally coinciding with the death of Hugo Chávez, the coming to power of Nicolás Maduro, the fall in oil production and the decrease in international oil prices.

Table 1. Distribution of the migrant population and Venezuelan refugees by destination countries 2019

Country	Number of migrants (thousands)	%	Refugee applicants (thousands)	%	GDP (p/c)	Democracy Index (V-Dem)
Venezuela	-	-	-	-	3.410,0	0,09
Colombia	1.600,0	34%	5	0,68%	6.667,8	0,47
Peru	863,6	18%	377	48%	6.941,2	0,62
Ecuador	385	8%	14	2%	6.344,9	0,47
Chile	371,2	8%	4	0,44%	15.923,4	0,77
Brazil	224,1	5%	135	17%	8.920,8	0,56
Argentina	145	3%	3	0,34%	11.683,9	0,68
Panama	94,6	2%	11	1%	15.575,1	0,61
Mexico	71,5	2%	17	2%	9.673,4	0,53
Dominican Republic	30	1%	0,2	0,02%	8.050,6	0,33
Costa Rica	28,9	1%	16	2%	12.027,4	0,83
Trinidad and Tobago	21	0,44%	14	2%	17.129,9	0,68

Country	Number of migrants (thousands)	%	Refugee applicants (thousands)	%	GDP (p/c)	Democracy Index (V-Dem)
Guyana	17	0,36%	-	-	4.979,0	0,42
Curazao	16	0,34%	0,7	0,09%	19.567,9	N/D
Aruba	16	0,34%	0,4	0,05%	25.630,3	N/D
Uruguay	13,7	0,29%	0,5	0,06%	17.278,0	0,78
Paraguay	3,8	0,08%	-	-	5.821,8	0,43
United States	309 ^a	7%	105	13%	62.794,6	0,74
Spain	323 ^a	7%	59	8%	30.370,9	0,76
Italy	50 ^a	1%	-	-	34.483,2	0,77
Portugal	25 ^a	0,53%	-	-	23.407,9	0,83
Others ^{**}	835,5	18%	184,9	24%	-	-
Total Latinamerica	3.901,4	82%	782,7	100%	-	0,48
Total World	4.736,9	100%	-	-	-	0,4

Notes: ^a See source (below). * 2017 figures. ** The “Other” category also contains the figures for the following countries: United States, Spain, Italy, Portugal, from different sources.

Source: Migrants all countries except the United States, Spain, Italy and Portugal: Map and geographic data, Latin America and the Caribbean, refugees and Venezuelan migrants in the region - December 2019, in PCRMV²⁴; United States (Pew Research Center, 2017); Spain (El País, 2020); Italy and Portugal (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019), own calculations. PIB p/c: World Bank database and IMF DataMapper, year 2018. Democracy index (V-Dem): Varieties of democracy, Liberal Democracy Index, year 2018.

This is a more extensive and diverse wave than the previous ones, mainly composed of broad popular sectors, impoverished

²⁴ <https://r4v.info/es/documents/download/72763>

middle classes and vulnerable populations including women traveling alone or with minors, unaccompanied minors, older adults and indigenous populations²⁵. It is also diverse in regard to the destinations, which now include almost all Latin American countries, with Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Ecuador, Brazil and Panama being the main recipients according to the Coordination Platform for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants (PCRMV)²⁶.

This last migration wave has also been characterized by the diversification of the means used to leave the country. While the flow of migrants from the first two was mobilized through international commercial airlines, the last wave has mobilized by land: private vehicles, buses and even on foot.

There has been, however, an addition: the temporary closure of the borders in the years 2018 and 2019 encouraged the use of clandestine roads (trails) devoid of any type of control and/or supervision by law enforcement, and with it the increase in crimes, among which the increase in the rates of people trafficking, forced labor, servitude and prostitution can be highlighted. These increased by 300% in the last four years²⁷, also considering the helplessness of these migrants.

Graph 1 illustrates the growth of the Venezuelan migrant population, segmented from the three migratory waves that have been defined. During the first wave, the migrant population

25 Muñoz-Pogossian, Betilde (2018). *Diáspora venezolana: tres olas en 20 años*. El Nacional. https://www.elnacional.com/opinion/columnista/diaspora-venezolana-tres-olas-migratorias-anos_262845/

26 <https://r4v.info/es/situations/platform>

27 <https://www.elpais.com.uy/mundo/victimas-venezolanas-trata-personas-aumentaron-cuatro-anos.html>

increased by 38% from approximately 319,000 in the year 2000 to 439,000 towards the end of 2005, while the second wave reproduced a similar growth rate (37%) from approximately 439,000 to 600,000 Venezuelan migrants. Finally, the third wave represents an increase of 700% of the migrant population, the vast majority concentrated in the last three years (2017, 2018 and 2019).

Regarding its geographical distribution, Table 1 shows that around 82% of migrants remain in the region: Colombia is the country with the largest number of Venezuelans (34% of the total amount), followed by Peru (18%), Ecuador (8%), Chile (8%) and Brazil (5%).

The number of Venezuelans in the United States was 421,000 in 2017, according to the Pew Research Center²⁸, of which 309,000 would have been born in Venezuela while the remaining 112,000 were born in the United States.

Finally, the Spanish case is difficult to analyze due to the historical link and the extensive Spanish community that migrated during the first half of the 20th century. According to data from the Spanish government in January 2019, the number of Venezuelan migrants in Spain reached 323,000 (between Venezuelans and Spaniards born in Venezuela²⁹), a figure that does not reflect the number of returnees (Spaniards who settled in Venezuela and returned to Spain during the crisis).

28 <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/fact-sheet/u-s-hispanics-facts-on-venezuelan-origin-latinos/>

29 https://elpais.com/ccaa/2020/01/08/madrid/1578489160_584792.html

It's not the economy. It's politics

The description of the three migratory waves carried out in the previous section shows the progressive diversification of the profiles of the migrant population, revealing the complexity of a process that extends throughout the period of the Chavista governments, and throughout the social spectrum of Venezuelan society. Based on this description of the migration phenomenon, we will address in this segment the reasons for the migration crisis, guided by the following hypothesis: in spite of the economic and social diversity of migrants, the three migratory waves respond to the same cause: political despair. In this sense, although the vertiginous deterioration of the economic and social conditions experienced since 2013 has become the main trigger behind the increase in migration during the third wave, the fuel that has fed them is the prolonged political crisis.

Having started early on among the economic and social elites of the first wave, despair spread due to the increase and expansion of repression towards all sectors of society as the charm of the "revolutionary" political project faded and, with it, popular support. In simpler terms: the analysis of the migratory phenomenon across the three waves reveals a common denominator among them: the progressive expansion of the authoritarian character of the Chavista regime, first expressed in terms of ideological domination (the hegemony of 21st century socialism), then in physical violence, and finally transformed into a humanitarian crisis. The indicators of authoritarian progress are reflected by three indicators of the quality of democracy in Table 2, showing how political conditions deteriorated in Venezuela year after year until reaching the status of an authoritarian regime in the last three years.

Table 2. Democratic deterioration 1995-2018

Indicator/ year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
EDI (V-Dem)	0,662	0,596	0,532	0,49	0,469	0,484	0,482	0,412	0,384	0,372
LDI (V-Dem)	0,473	0,374	0,326	0,283	0,247	0,259	0,205	0,188	0,17	0,164
FH	4	-	4	4	3,5	3,5	3,5	4	4	4
FH (Status)	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Indicator/ year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EDI (V-Dem)	0,368	0,35	0,384	0,375	0,311	0,279	0,285	0,278	0,24	0,213
LDI (V-Dem)	0,179	0,177	0,175	0,164	0,126	0,107	0,126	0,142	0,125	0,093
FH	4	4,5	5	5	5	5	5	5,5	5,5	6,5
FH (Status)	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	NF	NF	NF

Source: Freedom House, Scores and status. The Freedom House indicator varies between 1 and 7, the latter indicating the worst political conditions. The PF and NF codes indicate Partly Free and Not Free, respectively. EDI (Electoral Democracy Index) and LDI (Liberal Democracy Index), V-Dem: Varieties of democracy. Both indicators vary between 0 and 1, with 1 being the best democratic conditions.

Along with the spreading of repression towards more social sectors, the expectations of change are lost, obfuscating the possibilities of resolving the political conflict and thus encouraging migration. The relationship between economic and migration crisis is mediated by politics: when political despair is installed, economic and social problems become unbearable because their resolution turns imperceptible and current difficulties are projected into the future. This allows explaining that, within each migratory wave, cycles or micro-waves in which political events

can accelerate or decelerate the migratory tendencies within the same wave can be identified. Therefore, the “failure”³⁰ of a political event that has stimulated the expectations of political change of the population is followed by a migratory micro-wave.

This phenomenon became clearly visible for the first time after the electoral defeat of the opposition during the municipal elections held in December 2013. These elections were presented by the Venezuelan opposition leadership as a plebiscite³¹ that allowed to express the rejection towards the government of Nicolás Maduro, which was perceived as “very fragile” after the narrow and questioned victory (1.49% points of difference according to the data of the CNE³²) obtained in the presidential elections of April of the same year, full of fraud allegations.

The defeat of December 2013 generated a sense of hopelessness among the population which encouraged a micro-wave after the December holidays. In January 2014, the long lines of young people in embassies and consulates of a variety of countries in Caracas, seeking to apply for visas to study abroad³³, became national news. This strategy had long been the escape route preferred by the young people of the middle classes who wished to emigrate, because it allowed them to take advantage of the fact

30 The dynamics of the conflict have turned Venezuelan politics into a zero-sum game, in which there can only be total victory or defeat, therefore, the measure of the success/failure of any oppositional activity is measured from the overthrow of the government.

31 https://www.lainformacion.com/espana/capriles-llama-a-votar-en-municipales-y-construir-una-fuerza-contra-fraude_5jzmzmUWpBuOsmNnwFp6P6/

32 http://www.cne.gob.ve/resultado_presidencial_2013/r/1/reg_000000.html?

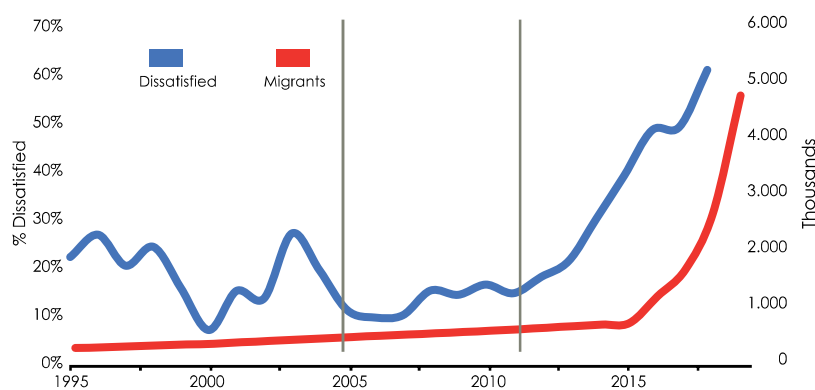
33 <http://www.20minutos.com/noticia/b22089/jovenes-venezolanos-buscan-emigrar-a-irlanda/>

that the government offered dollars at preferential prices, meant for Venezuelan students abroad³⁴. However, after the events of 2013, applications increased significantly.

Similarly, migrations accelerated after the protests of 2014 and 2017, the obstruction to the convening of the presidential recall referendum in 2016 and the election of the National Constituent Assembly in 2017.

Political despair has been expanding in this way over concrete political events, making the deterioration of economic and social conditions intolerable.

Graph 2. Satisfaction with democracy * and migration
1995-2019



Statistics: Pearson's correlation between the number of migrants and satisfaction with democracy is: $r=0,824$, $p<0,001$, $N=24$.

Notes: *The satisfaction indicator reflects the percentage of respondents who ask the question: In general, would you say that you are very satisfied,

³⁴ https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/01/140124_venezuela_interactividad_viajes_en

rather satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the functioning of democracy in Venezuela? They replied: "Not at all satisfied".

Source: Migraciones: International Organization for Migration, Migration Data Portal³⁵. Satisfaction with democracy: Latinobarómetro. Own calculations.

Graph 2 diagrams the number of migrants accumulated for each year together with dissatisfaction with the performance of democracy. In this sense, we interpret the increase in dissatisfaction as a manifestation of hopelessness due to the inability of the democratic political system to meet citizen demands for change. The indicator thus reflects the level of legitimacy of the political system in the conflictive and polarized Venezuelan society (Booth & Seligson, 2009). In this sense, the graph clearly illustrates how the increase in dissatisfaction with democracy precedes and promotes migration, corroborating the hypothesis raised: the political crisis is the variable of greatest weight after the migration crisis.

However, as we have stated at the beginning of this paper, the migration crisis represents a link in a crisis concatenation, so we must also analyze the role played by other links in the systemic crisis, especially the deep economic and humanitarian crisis.

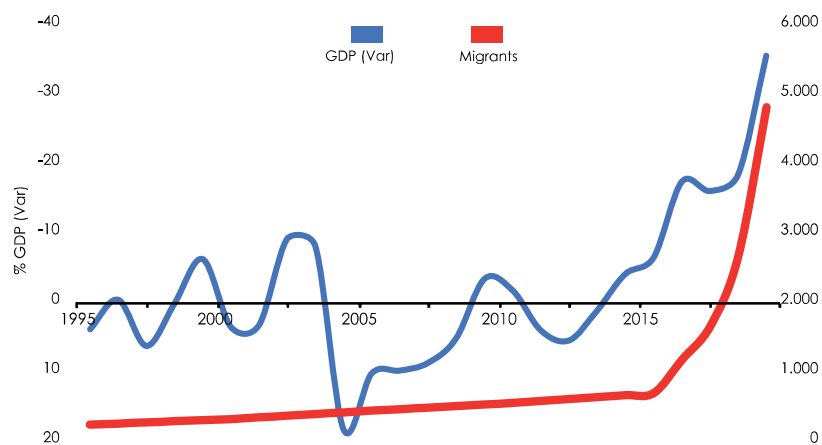
Graph 3 shows the migration figures together with the growth of the economy measured through the annual percentage variation of the Gross Domestic Product (in reverse scale).

The data in this graph confirm that none of the variables of the crisis operate independently, because, although the economic effect is not related to the first two migratory waves, it is clear that

³⁵ https://migrationdataportal.org/?i=stock_abs_&t=2019

as of 2013 the trends are aligned, reinforcing and feeding each other. This phenomenon is repeated with the data of poverty and deterioration of the quality of life in general.

Graph 3. % Variation of GDP * and migrations 1995-2019



Statistics: Pearson's correlation between the number of migrants and the variation in GDP is: $r=-0,792$, $p<0,001$, $N=25$.

Notes: * To highlight the relationship between migration and the percentage variation of GDP, the latter is plotted in reverse, so the upward curve actually shows the indicator's decline.

Fuente: Percentage variation of GDP: IMF. Migraciones: International Organization for Migration, Migration Data Portal³⁶. Own calculations.

Consequences: The voice of the absent

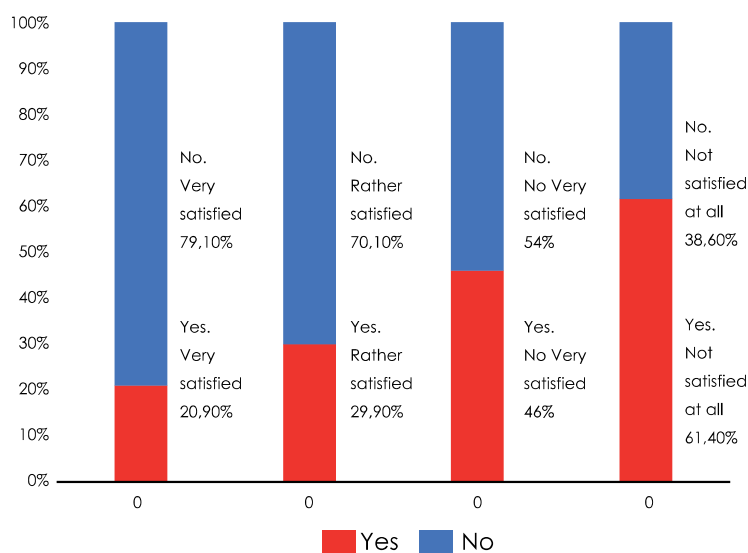
Once the migratory problem is analyzed in its extension and nature, we must research which are its repercussions on the different links of the crisis, with special emphasis on the political consequences in the struggle for democracy, in

³⁶ https://migrationdataportal.org/?i=stock_abs_&t=2019

a scenario of transition and subsequent consolidation. In this sense, it is extremely striking that although the relationship between democracy and migration has played a leading role in the extensive political literature on “the crisis of democracy” that has proliferated in the last two decades, almost all of the studies analyze the migratory effect on the democracy of the recipient country, the consequences for democracy in the country of origin being relegated in the research agenda.

In the structure of the analysis of migration and politics in the country of origin, the classic work of Albert O. Hirschman remains a reference of interest. In this work, the conceptual dyad “Exit” and “Voice” was used, which he used to analyze migrations in the context of the German Democratic Republic between 1949 and 1989. Exit is “the act of simply leaving, generally, because a better good or service or benefit is believed to be provided by another organization”, while Voice is “the act of complaining or of organizing to complain or to protest, with the intent of achieving directly a recovery of the quality that has been impaired” (Hirschman, 1993: 175-176). Concepts that interact in a hypothesis remain almost unquestioned today: “The presence of the exit alternative can (...) atrophy the development of the art of voice” (Hirschman, 1970: 43). Migration weakens the struggle for changing conditions.

Graph 4. Satisfaction with democracy and willingness to emigrate * 2018



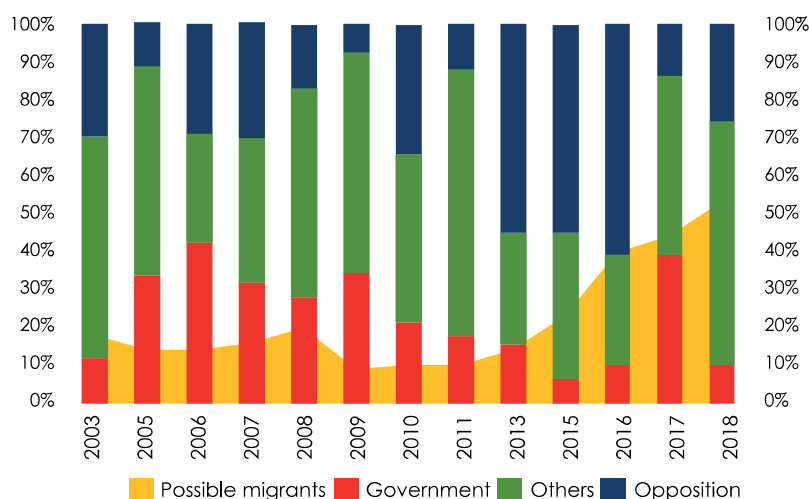
Note: * The question asked by Latinobarómetro is the following: "Have you and your family thought about the concrete possibility of going to live in another country?".

Source: Latinobarómetro. Own calculations.

Analyzing the Venezuelan crisis allows us to state that, in a context where the quality of democracy is constantly diminishing and will eventually lead to its disappearance (transition to an authoritarian government), migrations decrease the political pressure towards the regime, by expelling the most dissatisfied and politically disenchanted populations, the potential protesters who could raise their voice more radically against the government to demand changes.

Knowing the limitations presented by data from public opinion studies, which do not directly describe the migrant population but rather the potential migrants who claim to have evaluated the possibility of migrating³⁷, the data in Graph 4 confirm the hypothesis: those who are most dissatisfied with democracy have a willingness to emigrate twice as much to those who are "rather satisfied" and three times greater to those who are "very satisfied" with the functioning of the political system.

Graph 5. Political identification and possible migrants 2018



Note: * The question asked by Latinobarómetro is the following: "Have you and your family thought about the concrete possibility of going to live in another country?".

Source: Latinobarómetro. Own calculations.

37 The question asked by Latinobarómetro is: "Have you and your family thought about the possibility of moving to another country?"

However, those who claim to have considered migrating are not exclusively adversaries of the regime. On the contrary, Figure 5 shows that the willingness to migrate is distributed through various political identities. In fact, most Venezuelans who consider migration come from sectors that do not feel identified with either the government or the opposition, that is, precisely those who feel that their voice will not be heard in a polarized political scenario. As stated in the previous section, political despair is the main fuel after migration, and those who have less hope in the political system are those who feel excluded by not feeling represented, without identifying someone who can raise their voice or summon them to raise their voice to demand the satisfaction of their needs.

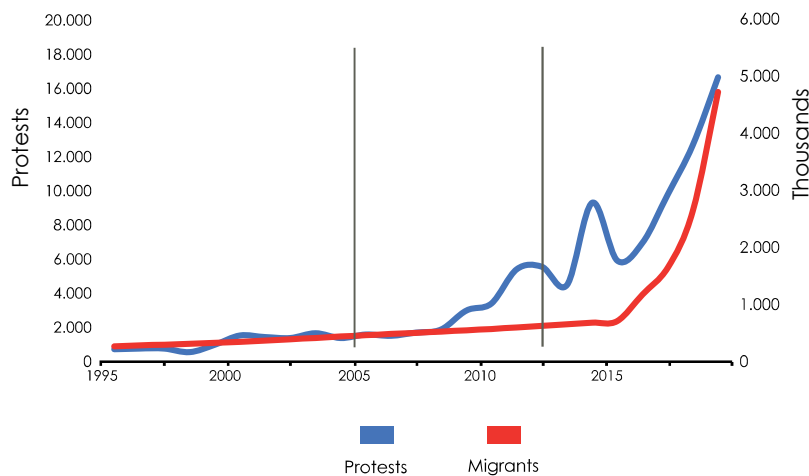
On the other hand, the sectors identified with the opposition also represent a significant portion of the potential migrants, a sector that becomes the majority of potential migrants in times of greater expansion of repression by the government, especially since 2013. Both groups (opponents and independents) together represent for every year (except in 2006 and 2017) two thirds or more of the population willing to migrate.

However, a proportion of migrants also comes from those who identify with the Chavista government, showing that the deterioration of political and social conditions also weakens loyalty to the regime.

A final piece of information invites us to make the hypothesis presented here a more complex one. Figure 6 reflects the number of demonstrations between 1995 and 2019 together with the number of migrants, showing that, contrary to expectations, the protest, far from weakening as a result of migration, is strengthened. Nor

does it diminish as a result of the deterioration of the quality of democracy, but instead, it intensifies. This data invites to adjust the hypothesis and its unidirectional character (migrations weaken the demands of change) because migrations also strengthen the internal demands of change.

Graph 6. Migrations and protests 1995-2019



Source: Migraciones: International Organization for Migration, Migration Data Portal³⁸. Protestas: 1995-2010, Provea (2010). 2011-2019, Observatorio venezolano de la conflictividad social (2019). Own calculations.

In this sense, the role of the absent, those who despairingly decided to leave their country, remains and strengthens the struggle for change among those who remain in the country. Hirschman (1993) states that, during the fall of 1989, migrations in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), instead of undermining protests, stimulated them: “[T] here was something particularly devastating about these [exits] - they drove some of the more

³⁸ https://migrationdataportal.org/?i=stock_abs_&t=2019

conscientious remaining citizens (...) to a passionate voicing of their concern and despair” Hirschman (1993: 196).

Migrations not only transform those who leave but also those who stay. The voice of the absent and their unsatisfied demands become flags of struggle and are appropriate for those who decide to stay, incorporating them into their speeches, giving them new meaning, broadening the spectrum of the political struggle of the opposing forces.

From this point of view, migrations can produce an articulation of social and political demands, elevating them to demand system change.

Political challenges and transition to democracy

The migration crisis presents several challenges for the democratic struggle, and the first is to converge the void of absence and despair with the demands of those who remain. In the last 20 years, there has been a rupture between the social and political protest that has been impossible to overcome for the political sectors that oppose Chavism. Therefore, perhaps the main challenge of the opposition is to internally turn migrations into a flag of struggle and incorporate the voice of the absent: why did those who left leave? What can we do to get them back?

At the same time, Venezuelan communities abroad also play a role in the democratic struggle. On the one hand, Venezuelan communities with greater resources have become important mediators between Venezuelan society and the different economic, social and political sectors in other countries. In this sense, the Venezuelan diaspora has built an extensive network of relations in a relatively short time that has helped to diffuse the

magnitude of the Venezuelan crisis. However, these communities also tend to divide in terms of politics, also promoting the division of the opposition sectors in Venezuela and a competition for the resources it can offer.

On the other hand, the large masses of immigrants also represent an incentive for cooperation among Latin American political leaders, where at least 80% of Venezuelan migrants are concentrated.

This geographical distribution of migrants also facilitates the possibility that they do not lose their voice completely as long as they are allowed to participate electorally. The challenge is not insignificant: it represents perhaps 20% of the electoral population, equivalent to any of the largest electoral circuits in the country: Zulia, Miranda and Capital District with 2.4 million, 2.1 million and 1.6 million voters respectively.

However, there are currently various remote voting mechanisms that could allow migrants to participate in the reconstruction of political, economic and social conditions for their return³⁹.

References

Booth, John. y Mitchell Seligson (2009). *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America: Political Support and Democracy in Eight Nations*. Cambridge University Press.

Dahl, Robert (1989). *Democracy and its critics*. Yale University Press.

39 The main voting mechanisms abroad meet in four types: vote by mail, electronic vote, vote through delegates and physical vote.

Hirschman, Albert. O. (1993). Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic: An Essay in Conceptual History. *World Politics*, 45, 173–202.

Hirschman, Albert. O. (1970). *Exit, voice and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations and states*. Harvard University Press.

Human Rights Watch (2008). *Una Década de Chávez. Intolerancia Política y oportunidades perdidas para el progreso de los derechos Humanos en Venezuela*.

Conclusions

On Friday, January 31st, Nicolás Maduro attended the Supreme Court of Justice and led the inauguration of the 2020 judicial year. In front of the magistrates of the dictatorship, heirs of those who more than a decade ago shouted “*Uh, ah, Chávez no se va*”¹, announced the installation of a special commission for the reform of the judiciary power. With this proposal, the dictator expressed his intention to deepen the construction of a justice system at the service of the political project led by himself.

The discursive reality and the actions of the regime seem to show its autocratic progress. In recent months, the dictatorship has not offered signs of flexibility or openness towards democracy. On the contrary, it seems that we are witnessing a process of autocratic perfection based on the consolidation of procedures far from a system of freedoms.

The issue that hereby concludes included articles by Héctor Briceño, Rogelio Pérez Perdomo, Ángel Alvarado and Juan Miguel Matheus, who delved into four topics of special importance for the understanding of the moment previously described: migration, political culture, economic reform and autocratic resilience. To conclude, we can offer three thoughts that stress the dimensions of the transformation that our country will demand in the future:

- 1) *On political culture*: Political culture is a fundamental issue to study political processes. The German author Dieter Nohlen emphasizes its importance and proposes

1 “Ooh, ah, Chavez will not leave”.

that analyzing contexts can explain how phenomena are developed. The destruction of the democratic culture in Venezuela after twenty years of the Chavista Revolution is remarkable. As Rogelio Pérez Perdomo describes it in his article “Socialist revolutions and law: perceptions and thoughts”, political change is not limited to the fall of one regime and the rise of another. It is a more complex issue that demands years of effort and transformation. Sometimes, those who are immersed in the Venezuelan tragedy lose sight of the dimensions of the damage we have suffered. It is hard for us to understand that Chavismo has entailed a historical leap that separated us from the 21st and threw us back into the 19th century. We fell back more than a century and into the rudimentary Venezuela that had not yet formed the basis for the development of a modern state, the foundations of a professional army nor the democratic mechanisms of citizen participation. We believe it is essential to identify this historical and cultural setback to move forward, with realism and hope, towards democratic transformation.

- 2) *On the autocratic dynamic*: Perhaps one of the most complex aspects of the Venezuelan political process was the identification of the autocratic nature of the Chavista Revolution. Identifying it and cataloging it as a dictatorship took years of struggle. When Hugo Chávez appeared on the political stage at the end of the 20th century, he attracted and enticed curiosity among the national and international public opinion. Populism had not yet emerged as a problem in the world, and many were optimistic while watching the rise to power by electoral means of a military coup that was close to Fidel Castro. An autopsy of the murder of our democracy could allow

identifying populism's mechanisms of political action with the purpose of creating institutional and social antibodies that stop their progress in other latitudes. In this sense, the articles of the deputies Juan Miguel Matheus and Ángel Alvarado serve as a guide that can be used by democratic forces to anticipate the survival of autocracies in the 21st century. Alvarado explains the economic reform capacity of the regime and Matheus, the resilience mechanisms of the Chavista Revolution. Both articles reveal the versatility of those who cling to power without putting limits on the means that allow them to maintain it.

- 3) *On the challenges of democratic liberation:* The particularities of the Chavista dictatorship impose uncertainties and opacities that hinder its understanding. As a new disease that affects the political body, we must reflect on the mechanisms that must be activated to overcome it. In the four editions of Democratization, we have identified dimensions that support its structure of injustice. In future research, we hope to ponder upon them and identify their interaction with the aim of promoting actions that could allow an eventual autocratic liberation.