The politics of movement between Venezuela and Colombia. Myths, realities and conflicts.

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Abstract: This essay examines the intense flow and re-flow of transnational migrants between Venezuela and Colombia, applying the theory suggested by Thomas Nail in his work the *Figure of the Migrant*. We initially focus on the regimes of social motion, and how they link with the political figures of migrants and the strategies of expulsion. Then, we consider the demographic contribution of Colombian diaspora in Venezuela and the socio-political repercussion of their current migratory crisis reverse movement. In pursuing the latter goal, we use primary sources like interviews and discuss censuses and surveys from both countries. We concluded that the current migratory flood is shaped by decades of Colombian immigration to Venezuela and the much quoted exodus is part of a new Cold War narrative.

Keywords: Colombian diaspora; politics of movement; proletarian; figures of migrants; surplus motion

Introduction

My interest in the population movement between Venezuela and Colombia began in 2013. When I arrived in Colombia, there was a small prosperous Venezuelan community. Most individuals I contacted were middle-and upper-class professional, many working in the oil industry companies founded and owned by Venezuelans, small business proprietors and professionals. I observed that many of them began to depart in 2014 to new destinies, like

the United States. However, a second wave of immigrants from Venezuela started to arrive from 2015. This new wave had two characteristics, most were underclass workers, and many were descendants of Colombians and returnees. They were the outcome of decades of Colombians migration to Venezuela. In this way to understand this new migratory flow, Colombians, who emigrated to Venezuela and their social condition matters.

This work explores a large scale contemporary population movement in a south to south corridor under the lights of techniques of social expulsion and the migrant figures. Figures that emerged from the historical evolution of social orders. I use for that purpose the method and the United States-Mexican case discussed by Thomas Nail in his book *The Figure of the Migrant* (2015), supplemented with archival sources, ethnographic material like interview, and an analysis on the limits of migratory statistics. The aim of the essay is not to explain the causes of migration but a portrayal of its social conditions and its contemporary hybridity and political complexity.

In the first section of the paper, I discuss the political regimes of social motion in both countries and how they induce the flow population and the figures of the migrants associated. Then the essay examines the substantial demographic contribution of Colombians to the population growth of Venezuela. The last segment is an alternative view to the current migration crisis narrative, remarkably influenced by the cold war nature of the clash between Venezuela and the United States and its regional allies. I suggest to look at this flood mostly as a reverse immigration of Colombian families hurt by the economic crisis, and under pressure to leave the country. As a final point, we consider this reverse movement as a kinetic problem involving the last strategy of extensive expulsion: denationalization. From this

perspective, the current migratory movement is shaped by Colombian immigration to Venezuela.

I gathered material from twenty-one structured interviews to understand the migrant's perspective on various topics like family origins, the decision to come to Colombia, relations with the local bureaucracy, work opportunities, and opinions on Colombian society. Sixteen of these were Colombians, including nine women, of first and second generation, most with Venezuelan passports. The rest were Venezuelans and Italians. I have used my own experience as an immigrant and obtained great help from intense debates, conversations and unstructured interviews with dozens of my Colombian students, colleagues, friends, and people coming from Venezuela I meet on the streets of Bogotá¹. Annania, a civil servant in Venezuela, help me to get the important view from the other side of the hill. Most participants received a pseudonym to protect them from unexpected repercussions. Long conversations with Italian parents, from my daughter Italian school, allowed me an enriched picture of foreign migrant opinions on Colombian society. I took many notes from these encounters and selected numerous newspaper articles relevant for this research.

¹ I conversed with 43 persons moving on the 19th avenue in the north of Bogotá in the last semester of 2019, an important commercial street, where this people begged for help in semaphores or were street seller. I asked them few questions like family ancestry and time living in Colombia, and 79 percent had one or two Colombian born parents, 64 percent had less than a year in Colombia and 77 percent of those with Colombian parents did not have Colombian citizenship. Most of them had plans to return to Venezuela and they returned between November and December, the reasons to return were lack of stable jobs, difficulties to get the Colombian citizenship even if they have the constitutional right, and some mention the problems to continue his studies due to the lack of money.

Politics of movement, petroleum, and the figure of the Colombian migrant

The political theory of the migrant suggests a historical perspective that regards migrants subsumed by the evolution of political modes and subordinated to social motion defined by expansion and expulsion. The theory of expansion by expulsion radicalizes and broadens Marx's concept of primitive accumulation since Marx's concept is related with the prior historical age before the rise of capitalism. Nail work unwrapped new angles for studying migrations as the politics of movement or kinopolitics, and as a condition for social orders expansion.

The theory emphasizes how different social regimes of accumulation since ancient times, and not only capitalism, bring into play four strategies of social expulsion: territorial, political, juridical, and economic. Each strategy is associated to a kinopower (centripetal, centrifugal, tensional and elastic forces), defined as the mode of circulation. The combinations of social expulsion strategies and mode of circulations produce four categories of migrants: nomad, barbarian, vagabond and proletarian. These figures are denied of their social status (expulsion) to develop new forms of social motion (expansion). These devices of a territorial, political, juridical, and economic expulsion continue to coexist and regulate contemporary migratory processes.

The notion of expansion by extensive expulsion is that which matters the most for our analysis. Nail describes three different ways in which such movements take place: penal transportation, as those carried out in the eighteenth century from Great Britain to her colonies; The emigration of the relative surplus of the population when the economy reaches a critical juncture, and the denationalization of returned migrants or the annulment of their citizenship rights. Therefore, the population flows in the Colombian-Venezuelan migratory

corridor may be illustrated by considering the political regimes of social motions in both countries, along with the strategies of expulsion and the migrant figures they produce.

Colombia has been, during great part of the twentieth century, a booty capitalist economy. Weber outlined booty capitalism as a manner of acquiring wealth and riches by the way of war, plunder, and speculative adventures (Parkin 2002). Many characteristics of this type of capitalism are to be found in the Colombia economy, like the large concentration, -through war and displacement- of land in few hands. In the cocaine production that gave rise to a powerful narcobourgeoisie integrated into the legal economy and institutions (Richani 2013) and that in the words of Arias Felipe (2019) is a “macroeconomic stabilizer”. A country locked in a vicious war over the control and commodification of land and governed indirectly as a European colonial empire (Robinson 2013). The national political elite, living particularly in the capital Bogotá, have left vast geographical spaces, in exchange for its power and stability, in the hand of provincial elites associated with non-state armed groups (paramilitaries and drug trafficking bands). Rural and frontier regions of Colombia live in a perpetual low-intensity armed conflict (Hristov 2014). This indirect form of rule produces chaos and expansive expulsion of social motion. The Colombian kinopolitics order displays an embedded tendency to expel the population to preserve political stability, shelter the power elites from social unrest and promote economic wealth concentration and capital accumulation by dispossession (Glassman 2006). As Koessler, using Bourdieu's sociological categories, states:

(...)The opening argument of the analysis is that the structure of the field is preserved in Colombia thanks to an inherent violence that comes from the beginning of the 20th century. This violence, assimilated into the habitus of the Colombian social agents,

differs from other cases in Latin America. In Colombia, violence is part of history and, therefore, an accepted praxis for the solution of conflicts that allows to overcome the barriers to system reproduction. (Koessler, 54)

Population displacements from their land and means of production began during the era known as *La Violencia* (1948-1961). Forced migration reached the astounding number of 2 million persons out of a population of 11 million, expanding the production frontier of cash crops by reducing subsistence peasant agriculture. The development of a neoliberal extractive economy (expansion) in the last two decades, such as oil, coal mining, biofuels and extensive livestock led to a new cycle of dispossession and forced displacement, with the expropriation of lands of peasant communities, and minority groups like natives and Afro-descendant populations. It deprived all these folks of their social status (expulsion), means of productions and political rights, criminalizing them or restricting their access to work through unemployment. A structural surplus of social motion is produced by continuous enclosures (Ruiz Ruiz and Santana Riva 2016; Hough 2007). This surplus either moves to Colombian urban centers swelling the informal economy or leaves (emigrates) the country.

The unit of victims of the Colombian government registers 7,364,964 persons forcefully displaced (data from the Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas), from 1999 to 2015. The extractive economy, during that time, thrived and an amalgam of non-state armed groups (paramilitaries), local and national elites, and transnational capital seized and concentrated from 8 to 10 million hectares of good quality land.

The political economy that guides all these actors was argued with a contemporary wit by Marx in a letter to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt, when Marx wrote: “in reducing the Irish population by eviction and forcible emigration, to such a small number that English capital

(capital invested in land leased for farming) can function there with security” (Marx and Engels 1975). In Colombia, regulating surplus population is a key factor of economic fine-tuning. Colombians are constantly encouraged or coerced to move in and outside the national boundaries.

These techniques, used by ruling elites to control population flows, are not exceptional in the history of migration. Sordi (1995) remarks, regarding the migrations in the ancient world (internal and external), that the displacement and expatriation of common people had a political-strategic dimension. Forced and encouraged emigration is a separation from their land and homes imposed on to the lower classes to safeguard the stability of oligarchic regimes, and to ease demographic and social pressure.

In the nineteenth century, a political-economic theory variant sponsored emigration to dispose of the so-called surplus population and the potentially *dangerous social classes*. Nail says about it:

British political economist and member of Parliament Robert Torrens argued that Britain could solve poverty not by granting the poor access to the land but by emigration. This position was popular, and many policies emerged from it... Or, as a Scottish parish journal put it more dramatically, Emigration is considered a riddance of a diseased population (Nail,107)

Venezuela is a state capitalist oil rentier economy as illustrated in the works of Baptista². During the high rise of oil investment driven capital accumulation, from 1920 to 1958, 1,3 million migrants (Sánchez Albornoz 2014) came to Venezuela. In 1921 the capital city of

² See: Baptista (1997)

Caracas had 100,000 inhabitants, and exports were a few million dollars in coffee and cocoa. The country was, in 1960, the second World oil producer, and the first exporter. Caracas had reached 1.2 million of inhabitants including 300,000 foreigner's migrants, mostly Europeans. A second and a third torrent of people³, although chaotic, arrived during the first oil boom (1974-1982) and the second one (2004-2011) attracted by the wealth prospects of rising oil prices⁴. In this manner the country has absorbed social motion surplus (immigrants) to regulate the flow imbalances produced by the economic kinopower (cycles) of oil income. And unlike other oil countries, Venezuela has encouraged the settlement of immigrants: Sassen underscores the complexity of migration to Venezuela compared with other oil-producing countries in the Middle East when she says:

In contrast to nations as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the recruitment of immigrant labor has a long history in Venezuela and occurs in a cultural context that historically has accepted and encouraged the long-term settlement (Massey et al. 1998, 211).

Venezuela became, in the twentieth century, a society with numerous foreign-minority communities that played a significant role in shaping the culture and institutions⁵. We may suggest this demographic change using data from INE, (National Institute of Statistics) vital

³ The first wave was a planned immigration, largely of Europeans. The second and third waves were mostly undocumented from Latin America and the Caribbean. Even if the Venezuelan census is not a reliable source to know the absolute number of foreigners, it is helpful to appreciate the tendencies. Most Colombians entered the country between 1970-1979 (22%) and from 2001 to 2011 (32%), according to the Venezuelan census of 2011 with number going back to 1920.

⁴ See, Romero (2010) about the Venezuelan migration puzzle during the second oil boom. Many foreigners came from countries with strong ties with the Chávez government. Between 2006 and 2013, 204,870 Cubans, 145,749 Chinese and 258,154 Brazilians arrived to Venezuela to work in different public projects or as immigrants see Balza Peña and León Malavé (2014).

⁵ According to González (1991) 42 percent of Venezuelans were foreign born and second and third generation migrants. Gall (1971) in one of the best articles on Colombia immigration estimated 20 percent of Venezuelan population as having European and Colombian ancestor's migrants in 1971.

events and annual reports of the Ministerio Relaciones Interiores. Foreigners with Venezuelan citizenship are 4 percent, foreigners with residence, temporal visa, and unauthorized about 6 percent, roughly 25-30 percent with contemporary foreign ancestry or double citizenship. The descendants of original colonial population are 60 percent (native, afro Venezuelans, creoles and mixed ethnic groups).

Colombian migrants' movement to Venezuela has been cyclical and associated with the expansion and contraction of oil revenues, but that does not imply causation since the decision that leads to emigrate is multidimensional. Yet, the oil-income cycles are an important factor of gravitation interlocked with the cycles of political and economic violence in Colombia.

Colombian immigration grew during *la Violencia*, a ten years' civil war that began after the assassination (1948) of radical politician Jorge Eliecer Gaitan. The flood of population increased yet again between 1974-1981, in the middle of the first oil boom in Venezuela. Thereafter, there was an abrupt decline of immigration concomitant with oil revenue reduction. The last wave of Colombian immigration, many of them refugees, intersects with the severe social violence in Colombia from 1991 to 2013, and the uphill oil price cycle. A reverse migratory movement started to take place in 2016 with the signature of the peace agreement with the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) and the severe economic crisis in Venezuela.

Colombian motives to move to Venezuela are work and family, according to empirical data and qualitative research⁶. A national survey (2014) done by Acov (Association of

⁶ For the importance of network families as a migratory conduit between the Colombian Caribbean Coast and Venezuela see: Bonilla (2012)

Colombians in Venezuela) with 34.682 Colombian migrant's households (AVN 2015), concluded that 77 percent of migrants moved to Venezuela for employment. The second reason for emigration (18 percent) was family networks, developed over decades with the transition from low to mass migration. Another survey (2011) done in Caracas with 511 respondents shows that 59.8 percent came to Venezuela for employment, 28.9 percent for family reasons, 2.5 percent because of violence, and 8.8 percent for free health, education and climate change (Phelan et al., 2013).

Yet, we get a personal view of migrants motives from interviews conducted by officials of the Immigration Service, between 2011 and 2014⁷. Colombians declared that they moved to Venezuela hoping for a better quality of life, economic facilities from the exchange system (subsidized exchange rates for remittances) to help the family back home, public housing⁸ and free education for their children. They could not get those benefits under the current policies of the Colombian government. They did not earn enough salary to buy a house, and the state does not finance them, along with the usual problems of the guerrillas and paramilitarism (insecurity) that force them to leave their homes. Then, as Nail argues, we need to be aware that emigration since the eighteenth-and nineteenth centuries is not only the product of free will but also the result underlying political and social conditions.

Colombian regions in the oriental frontier and the Caribbean coast became, during the last sixty years, a continuous source of cheap labor. Eight Colombian departments geographically

⁷ Interviews taken from the document: Situación de los ciudadanos colombianos en el país. - Servicio Administrativo de Identificación, Migración y Extranjería (Saime)-Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores.

⁸ Of 2,197,050 social houses units granted, between 2011 and October 2018, 138,413 (6.29 percent of the total) went to foreign families and of these 113,499 (82 percent) to Colombian families. Prensa Minhvi (2018)

close to Venezuela provided 70 percent of the Colombian migrants, and many settled in two Venezuelan border states. The Colombian community (first and second generation) is enormous in border states. In the oil-producing state of Zulia lives 801,465 Colombo-Venezuelans out of a population of 3,704,404, and in the agricultural state of Táchira 543,533 out of 1,168,908 inhabitants (data estimated from Acnur et al. 2008; INE-Anuarios Estadísticos de Venezuela). Being a cross border migration, the Colombian community kept strong cultural, family, traveling and economic exchange ties with the place of origin. Even if there are no national studies on bonds between the second generation Colombians and the country of origin. An ethnographic study carried out in Merida with children of Colombians revealed that they were well adapted to Venezuela, but also through their parents, the local Colombian community and traveling and spending school time in Colombia, they preserved a robust relationship to the place of origin⁹.

Political figures of migrants are associated with the strategies of social expulsion and the mobile process (kinopower) in a particular historical milieu. The proletarian is the principal figure since the nineteenth century, whose movement is determined by the economic elastic forces of extensive expulsion (expansion and contraction) that redistributes the population to cover a deficit or removes the surplus. The transnational proletarian is the prevailing figure of the Colombian migrant in Venezuela. In this way, Venezuela had absorbed surplus population from Colombia to fill a labor population gap.

Most Colombian workforce clustered in jobs like domestic servants, called in Venezuela *cachifa* (o) that comes from the English word Kitchen-chief who is also a stigmatizing term for Colombians, hairdressers, janitors, babysitter, mason, day laborers, agricultural workers

⁹ Urbina Pimentel (2003)

and street vendors. Colombian families were relegated at the lower end of the social scale as a foreign underclass. They fell into the lowest salary bracket in the country, fulfilling many services demanded by wealthy urban middle-and upper classes, most of them creoles and white's European expatriates¹⁰. The additional demand came from Venezuelan small businesses, whose expansionary pace has required cheap and unskilled workers¹¹.

Another social category, which is not discussed by Nail, is what Bauman (2004) calls redundant people. People possessing no distinct social status and unneeded for economic growth. They are neither valuable consumers nor producers. They are a financial problem because they need to be provided for – that is fed, shod and sheltered (Bauman 2004). These migrants come from the *outcast* segments of Colombian society and need help to reproduce biologically, since they cannot produce their own means of subsistence.

In Agamben's (1998) depiction, the excluded being is suggested by the *homo sacer*, a juridical term of archaic Roman law to describe the cast out from the community. His life is devoid of value. He can be killed without any legal consequence and cannot be part of sacrificial rituals that entails the loss of a life, "in its present-day version the *homo sacer* is neither defined by any set of positive laws nor a carrier of human rights that precede legal rules" (Bauman ,49)

In Colombia there is a term, used for decades in public discourses and now privately, to categorize the outcast: *desechables* (disposable). There is a long list of "undesirable" that included beggars, street children's drug addicts, petty criminals, prostitutes, LGBT, political activist, human rights defenders, union leaders, idle persons perceived as a drain on the

¹⁰ For a relation between race and social classes in Venezuela see De Corso (2019)

¹¹ 75 percent of Colombian works in business with 10 or less employees.

resources of society and lately migrants¹² coming from Venezuela. Social cleansing groups¹³ like paramilitary forces and vigilantes, allied with the state security apparatuses or elites, have been responsible for numerous massacres. This permanent war against lower social strata and political dissidence has been a way to enforce social order and discipline.

In dialogue with Caracol Radio a few years ago, a Consul of Colombia in Caracas and Colombians from local associations acknowledged that 70% to 80% of Colombians in Caracas lived in slums, and portrayed them involuntary as the figure of the *social outcast*. They described *ghettos* occupied by a floating population of itinerant workers with unstable occupations and many single mother household, with their son's out of the school system and in street gangs. Nevertheless, they could subsist in Venezuela, despite all difficulties they endure, thanks to subsidies provided by the government (Caracol 2006).

There are other categories such as the barbarian, the nomad, and the vagabond. They are ideal types since we should understand those figures in an overlapped way.

Barbarian is described by Nail, following Aristotle, as the person unable to speak Greek, the language of the geopolitical center. The absence of logos, understood as the inability to be part of the social- political body and extremely mobile in relation to the polis.

Centrifugal force is an outward-directed motion from the center to the periphery. The large concessions given to transnational companies by the central state are at the core of this social motion. A case in point is the Department of Guajira in Colombia, where the local economy of the Wayuu native people was ruined and its water resources depleted by coal mines owned

¹² For threats of death to migrants coming from Venezuela, see: W Radio 2019

¹³On the criminal actions taken by the vigilante and paramilitaries see: Stannaw (1996), Graham (2016) and Manetto (2019).

by Anglo-American, BHP Billiton and Glencore. It forced many Colombian Wayuu to leave their lands, moving to the Zulia state in Venezuela, where a large native community akin to the Wayuu lives.

The Colombian "illegal" has been considered in the public speech as the figure of the *Barbarian*, and a carrier of disorder, social problems, drug trafficking, prostitution, contagious diseases, and so forth. The Venezuelan bourgeoisie angrily criticized the naturalization of thousands of them in 2004¹⁴, because "those people vote for Hugo Chávez to receive perks". This bigoted rhetoric highlights the figure of the "illegal" Colombian as a social inferior being unable to be a citizen, much like the barbarians of the ancient classical world.

This xenophobic discourse was retaken during the closing of the frontier between August 2015 and August 2016, with the ruthless expulsion¹⁵ of 30,000 Colombian and their children born in Venezuela. The government used military forces to expel whole communities, marking and demolishing their houses on border districts and suspended the juridical order on the frontier regions for one year. A particular military target was *el Barrio la Invasion* where 1,800 Colombians families lived and according to the Venezuelan government a big paramilitary base operated.

Colombians were blamed for harboring "paramilitaries and smugglers" and of being ungrateful to the Bolivarian revolution. But the discourse included new accusations. Colombian migrants were condemned for being too many, poor and jeopardizing Venezuelan

¹⁴ For naturalization of undocumented immigrants see Schwarz (2014)

¹⁵ For the reasons to deport Colombians see: The Guardian (2015) and Agencia Efe- El Espectador (2015).

social welfare, economy and internal security. The elimination of visa in 2011, according to the Venezuelan government, caused a massive entry of destitute Colombian families impossible to control¹⁶. Since 2015, Colombians migrants faced a legal apparatus that reduced legalization procedures¹⁷, refused to issue birth certificates to their baby born or the renewal of national identification card, increased deportation and decreased access to basic public aid. However, naturalizations were resumed in 2018 and a total of 8,831 foreigners were given Venezuelan citizenship, including 5,781 Colombians, using a new procedure. The Colombians naturalized were part of 10,000 recommended by the Association of Colombians in Venezuela as “good potential citizens”¹⁸.

The opinion of Annania captures the prevalent mood as she states:

As director of a state institution (2012) I was in the Sambil (Candelaria) shelter center where I found 3 undocumented Colombian families, who entered the country three days before a protest to demand public housing. They were 6 adults and 7 children. These people asked me to help them to get the Venezuelan *papers* because they needed a house. I inquired about their arrival in the shelter and I was informed that they had Colombian friends and family that told the newcomers of the planned protest to compel the government to provide public housing. As the national director of addiction treatment program, I found a 20-year-old undocumented Colombian in a

¹⁶ According to data from the Venezuelan Immigration Services after the elimination of visa requirements in 2011, from 2012 to 2014, 500,000 Colombian overstayed their time in Venezuela. This problem was detected early in 2012 when Venezuelan Foreign Ministry sent a diplomatic note expressing the preoccupation for Colombians tourist, since 70 percent were staying in Venezuela. See Redacción Cucuta- El Tiempo (2012).

¹⁷ On all problem faced by the Colombia community like deportation, refused renewal of documents and birth certificates to their children see: Altuve (2015), Pardo (2015) Infante (2013), Hernandez (2019) and Redacción Heraldó (2015)

¹⁸ See: Fermin (2018)

care center who had drug problems that entered the country a month before my visit. It is a great irresponsibility by the state not to have control over people entering Venezuela and to include them in social programs under pressure or as an erroneous sense of solidarity. As a civil servant I have met Colombians who, without being naturalized, are working in the public administration.

The violent expulsion of Colombians worsened the historically tense relations between both countries¹⁹. Many Colombian media outlets centered their news, for a month, on the maltreatment of Colombian migrants running dozens of stories. Ex-president César Gaviria called it the worst humiliation suffered by Colombians in two hundred years at the hands of the Venezuelans. This resentment is not new. Colombians consider that their migrants are detested and abused in Venezuela. A Director of the International Department of a University in Bogotá told me “Venezuelans had always considered us blacks, scums and prostitutes”. This is not an isolated opinion; it surfaced in most of my conversation with informants. It has triggered an obsessive *revanchist* spirit toward Venezuela. Venezuelans were described by most of our contacts as arrogant, ignorant and lazy. Colombian Senator²⁰ Fernanda Cabal in an interview to Miami ETV channel summarizes the ideas of many Colombians about Venezuelans. She called Venezuelans: “rich, lazy, privileged, good fortune people that had everything they wanted thank to a strong Welfare state and Colombia the poor neighbor, the Cinderella that profit from Venezuela wealth ...” Unfortunately, the relations between both countries are marked by prejudices, hatred and envy.

¹⁹ See: Aguilera (1994).

²⁰ Fernanda Cabal (2019)

Another figure of the Barbarian is the climate migrant, illustrated here as a historical social category. As B. Lee Drake says:

A recent reconstruction of the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) offers insight into a specific potential climatic driver for historical migrations in Europe... specifically in the Western Roman Empire... a key vulnerability of climate change are push factors which contribute to migrations” (Drake, 2, 4).

The 2010 Colombian heavy rainy season associated with flooding and landslides left 1.5 million homeless. Many of them moved to Venezuela, most coming from the northern coast. The city of Caracas sheltered 58,299 Colombian climatic refugees (Expansion 2010).

Barbarian is also a figure identified with the ancient Germanic and Slavic tribes crossing the Roman Empire limes and colonizing imperial lands. Colombians move, frequently, in great numbers to Venezuela, seizing land and founding small towns and barrios on the frontier. A relevant example is the town of *El Cruce* (the Crossing) in Zulia border state settled by thousands of Colombian families fleeing from right-wing paramilitary violence (Lares 2005).

The vagabond is the third figure associated to the rise of modern states. They are the product of tensional forces and the dissolution pre-capitalist juridical covenants. In today's world, we could relate the vagabond to guest worker programs. In the Colombian-Venezuelan case, workers in border areas have been subject to an international legal provision, the Tonchala Treaty signed in 1959. This treaty allows Colombian and Venezuelan labor force to cross the border to work. But it never benefited the Venezuelan working class, because that was not

the intention. The treaty benefited Venezuelan agrarian capital, which hired cheap Colombian seasonal workers.

In 1980, of one million agricultural workers in Venezuela 250,000 were Colombians, many were guess worker. (Gomez and Diaz 1983). In 1996 in western Venezuela, cattle ranches used 150,000 Colombian braceros. In 2015, during the closing of the frontier, 70 percent of 85,000 agricultural workers in the border state of Zulia were Colombians and to please landowners none of one of them were deported, even though many were without identity cards. In the border state of Táchira, in six municipalities on the frontier limit , the special census carried out in 2016 totaled 25,000 Colombians out of 75,000 employees in agriculture, manufacture and commerce activities and 21 percent of the population was born in Colombia²¹ and another 20 percent with Colombian ancestry.

The last figure is the nomad, whose kinopower is the centripetal force brought about by the hoarding of land for agriculture and mining. The agrarian counter-reform in Colombia and the mining concessions to transnational corporations are decisive factors to understand the exclusion of people from the means of production. This was intense in border departments like Guajira and Norte de Santander, thus producing a floating population which became involved in smuggling Venezuelan products to survive. Constantly moving back and forth and trafficking mostly gas. The emblematic figure is the *pimpinero*, the designation of the Colombian gasoline smuggler named after a small plastic container. In the city of Cúcuta some 12,000 families survived on selling smuggled gasoline, also a basic component for the chain of cocaine production.

²¹ This was an especial census conducted in six border municipalities by the Ministerio de Planificación (Ministry of Planning).

The second group of nomads are peasants evicted from their land and means of production. We know them as persons in need of international protection or refugees. During, the period of La Violencia (1948-1961) some 100,000 people entered Venezuela fleeing the civil war and land concentration in Colombia. A second wave, 200,000 refugees, arrived between the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twentieth-first century as the conflict in Colombia escalated (Acnur et al. 2007; Cruzando las Fronteras Memorias del Exodo hacia Venezuela el caso del Rio Arauca 2015).

The life story of the Cabarcas family, (Heraldo, 2015) embodies the figure of the Colombian nomad migrant family in Venezuela. Etilso Cabarcas is one of the many folks displaced forcefully by paramilitaries from the La Bonga agricultural village, in the Bolívar Department, where he was a small farmer. After moving to Cartagena, where he could not find a stable job or help from the Colombian government, he emigrated to Venezuela in 2001. In Venezuela he worked as a street vendor on the beaches of Margarita Island, but thanks to his stature and corpulence, he got a permanent job as a private security guard in los Teques, capital of the Miranda state. In 2007 he brought his 5 children, the firstborn with his wife Vanessa and three children. His eldest son and wife worked on the beaches of Margarita making and selling handicrafts. In 2014 Vanessa was deported. Etilso, fearing deportation, returned to Colombia in 2015 leaving behind his house in the popular neighborhood Las Laderas de los Teques in the care of his niece. The story of the Cabarca family is the chronicle of many internally displaced Colombian, moving first to Colombian urban center and later becoming economic migrants in neighbor countries.

When examining the Mexico–USA migration case, Nail says: “In the United States, Mexican Barbarians are instead subject to slave-like conditions (agricultural, domestic and janitorial

work) as undocumented or guest workers” (Nail, 199). This has been the case of the Colombian labor force in Venezuela.

The demographic contribution of Colombians to population growth in Venezuela

There were 30,921 Colombians living in Venezuela in 1945 and by the first decade of the Twenty-First Century, there are 1 million Colombian born, according to censuses. However, the censuses absolute figures are not reliable, nonetheless they are useful to understand tendencies and proportions of migrant’s national origins. The Venezuelan census is voluntary and participation of foreigners’ migrants is low. Yet the questionnaire includes a question of Venezuelans born abroad of Venezuelans citizens, parent or parents and Venezuelan citizens by naturalization.

Colombian immigration has been mostly unauthorized²², entering across the 300 illegal passages alongside the 2,000 kilometers of the common border. Statistics based on legalizations and the migratory net balance evidence a higher volume of migrants. From 1960 to 2010, 1,689,893 Colombians (924,118 during the Chavez government)²³ were legalized. These people entered Venezuela walking throughout informal tracks know as *caminos verdes* (green roads) and 1,210,395, from 1950 to 2015, arrived authorized. According to this data, approximately, 2,900,288 Colombians emigrated to Venezuela in half a century, 136,872 of them die of natural causes in Venezuela and 600,000 became citizens²⁴. But Colombians

²² About the social and economic impact of unauthorized Colombian immigration see Davila (2000).

²³ By 1998 there were 400,000 stateless children and adolescents, most with both unauthorized Colombian parents. Venezuela granted them citizenship with an executive order (decree n. 2819) in 1998 (Alvarez et al. 2001, 311). Before that, thanks of an agreement between both countries, national ID were also released to 150,000 children between 9 and 15 years’ old of Colombian unauthorized parents, Mantilla (1991).

²⁴Data taken from Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores annual reports, Punto de información situación de los ciudadanos colombianos en el país and INE- vital statistics.

migrants are highly mobile. They move back and forth, across illegal border pass, and not all settled permanently.

I propose an estimate of those who settled permanently, computed by using the number of deaths and the mortality rate (2 per thousand) of the Colombian age group ranging from 15 to 65 years of age (80 percent of the Colombian migrants) in 1944, which is projected with the census growth rate tendency until 2015. The stock of Colombians (both authorized and not) rose from 44,703 people in 1944 to 1,651,784 in 2015.

Colombian community in Venezuela in 2015, before their reverse movement, was roughly 4,330,273 inhabitants²⁵ (38 percent foreign born), the largest ancestry group of the country. Colombians are about 14 percent of the population of Venezuela and 9 percent of the population of their homeland.

This mass of population is invisible for big media corporation, think tanks and multilaterals like IOM. But this population constitutes a vast potential for double citizenship and most people moving from Venezuela to Colombia are involuntary dual nationals. They are divided in two categories, those born in Venezuela that grew up there until their families decided to return and a young second generation adults²⁶. This is the actual context to grasp the next

²⁵ It is difficult to gauge the real number of Colombians of different generations living in Venezuela. Although all expert sources agree they are several millions. As claimed by the Venezuelan Service Immigration (SAIME) and Ministerio del Interior, the Colombian community was 5,135,346 (33% foreign born) in 2015. The Colombian Embassy in Caracas estimated 4,000,000 of them in 2014. Ex Colombian President Pastrana between 4 and 5 million, Acov (Association of Colombians in Venezuela) about 5 million, Proyecto Migration Venezuela, from 3.5 to 5 million and so forth. Our estimation, used vital events from 1944 to 2015. For a current discussion on numbers see Kuehnle (2018).

²⁶ Second generation Colombians age groups are: 28.61 percent between 0-15 years of age, 39.14 percent from 16 to 35, 20.34 percent from 36 to 49 and 11.91 percent 50 years and over. The average age is 28 years' old. About, 3.3 million first and second generation Colombians have

strategy of expulsion and the main source of the current migratory flow on the Venezuelan – Colombian frontier. This dynamic is comparable to the one between Mexico and the United States. In Mexico lives close to one million U. S. citizens, perhaps only 60,000 mononationals. The remainder are dual national, mostly children's and adolescents born in the United States of Mexican families deported or voluntary repatriated²⁷.

Superfluous Colombians or Venezuelan exodus?

A review of the current Colombian-Venezuelan migratory flows is important to broaden the notion of kinopolitics. That is the last strategy of expansion by expulsion: denationalization.

The information on the state of migratory flows along the Colombian-Venezuelan border are doubtful. Most of the statistics are produced by Latin America conservative's government's subaltern to the United States regional policies. The so- called Lima group, directly involved in the politics of regime change in Venezuela and this is not a hypothesis but a notorious fact. This circumstance produces reasonable hesitation about data consistency. As Scheel and Ustek-Spilda say, and it applies to understand the politics of numbers in the Colombo-Venezuelan corridor: "politics concerns how institutional interests and agendas of the actors of particular policy field shape decisions about how migrants are counted and what kind of numbers are ultimately disseminated in the public sphere" (Scheel and Ustek-Spilda 2018).

A paper by Freier and Parent (2019) is a good example of the use of unreliable statistics but also the lack of familiarity about Venezuela migration history and a cold war ideological

Venezuelan passports. According to one source, there were 1.9 million Colombo-Venezuelans registered to vote (10% of total registered voters), see Chirinos (2012).

²⁷ See the work of Harpaz (2019).

prejudice against the Bolivarian revolution; the perfect cocktail for a low quality research, affiliated to the views of migratory authorities of Peru, Colombia and Ecuador²⁸, but widespread cited and endorsed as factual. They echoed the number divulged by the International Organization for Migration, IOM (data collected mostly from the Lima group) saying 3 million Venezuelans had left the country since the crisis adding that the figure already surpassed 4 million people by the end of 2017 and so forth. According to the authors, in 2018, the countries hosting most Venezuelans were Colombia, with over 1 million, Peru, with over 600,000 and Ecuador with 222,000. If these data are to be believed, these three countries host 61 percent of people that left Venezuela. But Freier and Parent never compared these figures with Venezuelan censuses and vital events. The 2011 Venezuelan census estimated that 67.5 percent of all migrants living in Venezuela came from Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, and their fertility rates was above the Venezuelan national average of two children per woman (total fertility rate of Colombian is four children). Freier and Parent are not aware of the simple fact that migration is not only a one-way movement. Migrants may return home or emigrate further as many studies show²⁹.

In document³⁰ introduced by the Venezuelan government in the International Criminal Court that includes important updated social data, the Venezuelan government admits a net

²⁸ Many government officials of these countries have a license to lie, The President of Ecuador- Lenin Moreno- affirmed in the U.N. during 74th Session that there was half a million of Venezuelans living in Ecuador. In an article, Hanson (2018) timidly questioned the Venezuelan emigration wave, citing the fact 641,353 Venezuelans entered Ecuador from January to August, 2018, but the vast majority— 524,857—left.

²⁹ Wyman (2001).

³⁰ Venezuelan file a lawsuit against the United States over sanctions in the International Criminal Court (ICC). Introducing a supporting document of 56-page describing unilateral coercive measures as a crime against humanity. See Annex I to the Prosecution's Provision of the Supporting Document of the Referral Submitted by the Government of Venezuela (2020)

emigration between 2015 and 2019 of 1,203,237 persons. The U.N. data ³¹allows us to deduce the number of migrants in 1,829,097, between 2015 and 2019. Of the stock of Venezuelans living abroad 41.5 percent (1,048,714) were in Colombia. According to the U.N. the number of Colombians living in Venezuela remain constant since 2015 in 950,000. Thus the real number of emigrants, from 2015 to 2019, is somewhere between 1.2 and 1.8 million, but this figure includes foreigners returning home, mostly Colombians.

Data collected by IOM and the World Bank ³² admits that of the 1 million alleged migrants from Venezuela living in Colombia, some 300,000 ³³ are repatriating Colombians born. But information of family components is sporadic and do not include Colombians born in Venezuela ³⁴. The total number of Colombians of different generations repatriating could be much greater than the 300,000 mention. These people could also have been register as *citizens* of the host country. Therefore, the term Venezuelan emigrants should be used with discretion. In fact, migratory statistics release by the Colombian government cannot withstand the slightest scrutiny.

In demography, there is an association between vital events and the size and the biological structure (age and sex) of the population that produces them (Newell 1988). As Van Hook ³⁵ says “populations leave “footprints” of their presence in the form of deaths and births”.

³¹ Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2019 Revision.

³² See World Bank report (2018) for the main arguments used in all documents of the IOM and corporate mass media.

³³ Migration Colombia claims between 250,000 and 500,000 repatriating born Colombians. If this figures are true, perhaps the number of Colombians born in Venezuela going back, most with their parents, could be between 350,000 and 1,000,000, taking into account that in Venezuela for each Colombian born, there are from 1.5 to 2 descendants. These numbers are only a rough guess. See: Proyecto Migración Venezuela (2019), Henao (2019). According to Pineda and Avila, 70% of people moving from Venezuela to Colombia were Colombian born or descendants (Pineda and Avila,74).

³⁴ OIM (2017).

³⁵ Van Hook (2019).

According to DANE census bureau, 615 Venezuelans from all ages die in Colombia (0.3 percent of total death) in 2018. They were registered by their place of birth and document they possessed when they died. Since age structures of both populations (Colombians and Venezuelan migrants) are close, it is reasonable to use the national Colombian crude death rate (4,9 per thousand) to estimate Venezuelan migrants. With this approach, Venezuelans immigrants in Colombia are 125,264. If we use the 3,859 births (0,6 percent of total birth) with Venezuelans born parents, and crude birth rate of Venezuela (16 per thousand) which is slightly above the Colombian, the total number of migrants could be 234,578³⁶. The number of mononationals Venezuelans in Colombia are most likely to be around 200,000. That figure is far from the one million or more of Venezuelans living in Colombia. Indeed, and this is our argument, there is no association between vital events and the numbers of publicized Venezuelans immigrants³⁷.

In effect, on migrants living in Colombia, neither the DANE, nor Migration Colombia uses statistical tools that differentiate between Colombians born abroad and foreign national immigrants. Therefore, the criterion of place of birth and passports alone does not allow us to analyze Colombia statistics on immigration; one must also take into account the ancestry. The Colombian census is mandatory and persons are requested to show an identification card. But the survey does not include questions about Colombians born abroad of Colombian

³⁶ I assumed that all vital events are produced by mononationals Venezuelans and do not include Colombians born in Venezuela without the Colombian citizenship certificate.

³⁷ According to the DANE census of 2018, there were 900,000 persons born abroad (including an unknown number of them of Colombian parents). Migration Colombia estimated more than a million Venezuelans by the end of 2018. It is surprising that only 27 Venezuelans settled in Colombia between 1991 and 2009, according to that data. I consider those numbers of little use to grasp the complex reality of the mixed migratory movement in that border corridor, see: Migración Colombia (2018).

citizen's parent or parents and Colombians citizens by naturalization³⁸. As a result, the migratory numbers leave Colombian descendants outside the demography of the country counting them only as foreigners.

When examining the data of the 2018 census, Alexandra Castro, director of the Migration Observatory of the Externado University said³⁹ ... “it is possible that many (Venezuelans) are not included in the census. In addition, in border areas there may be some Colombians who were born in Venezuela”. It is hard to believe that an expert on migration is unaware with the fact that a couple of millions of children, in the last forty years, were born in Venezuela to Colombian parents and of them 59 percent born and raised in four Venezuelan border states (Zulia, Táchira, Amazonas and Apure).

Yet, it is well known in literature that foreigners settling in Colombia include an unquantified number of persons born abroad of Colombian parents, who usually arrive with the return of the latter (Ochoa 2012).

Therefore, the Colombian–Venezuelan migration flow has crucial implications as a political kinetic problem. Nail argues:

Denationalization solves a kinetic problem posed by emigration: the migrant might return home ... Return migrants make the elastic management of surplus population more challenging. Thus after World War I, a new technology of expulsion was invented that aimed to solve this problem once for all: denationalization (Nail,109).

³⁸ The only question is the place of birth, see Dane cuestionario 2018 question number 38.

³⁹ Cigüenza Riaño (2019)

Since the First World War, the birth-nation link was loosened from each other. On one side, there was an increase of refugees and stateless persons in Europe, displaced from their home countries. The other phenomenon is the institution by many European states of juridical measures allowing for the mass denaturalization and denationalization of large portions of their own populations.

Denationalization is an elastic force which can identify a broad diversity of human surplus (national, ethnic, linguistic etc.) and expel them from any kinetic boundaries. Denationalization creates a highly mobile surplus outside the normal perimeters of intensive expulsion that often resulted in increased national heterogeneity, including unemployment, poverty, criminality and prison cost, which the state often paid for in welfare. States opted for an extensive denationalization to eliminate these costs. Colombia adopted the *Jus sanguinis* principle (article 96 in the constitution of 1991) to provide citizenship to Colombians born abroad. But the normative is arbitrarily decided by officials (civil registry offices). Few civil register have made public statistic, but those released, like the one in Norte de Santander, shows that two thirds of those having the *Jus sanguinis* right did not obtain the Colombian citizenship⁴⁰.

The RAMV (Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants) is a case of data management used to expel the returning migrants of all kinetic boundaries. The register was carried out by the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management in 2018 with the assistance of USAID⁴¹ and IOM. Of the 442,462 people registered, many were children and adolescents born in

⁴⁰ For the best work about the numerous bureaucratic barriers faced by Colombians born in Venezuela to get the citizenship, see: Campos Encinales (2019) and the audio and article of Rodríguez (2019)

⁴¹ This Agency has provided hundreds of millions of dollars to the Venezuelan opposition, see New Cold War (2020)

Venezuela of Colombian parents without the Colombian certificate of citizenship. The census also included Colombian ethnic minority categories such as the Raizales (people from the Colombian Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina) and Romani people, or Wayuu native people that live on both side of the frontier and move back and forth since pre-Columbian times, most of them with double citizenship. Of 250,000 adults who answered the questionnaire, 106,000 declared having Colombian relatives. It was a census that mixed Colombians families repatriating with Venezuelan migrants, yet all were registered as Venezuelans.

The RAMV data is useful to infer the national origin of the population moving from Venezuela to Colombia. We used a research method previously tested. Santana (2009) did a study using the geographical distribution patterns of Venezuelan immigrants in Colombia to measure their number since the censuses do not register differences between citizenship and place of birth. He used two variables, the Venezuelan migrants living in each Colombian department, according to the Colombian census of 2005, and Colombians returnees by department with migratory experience in Venezuela. He employed a non-parametric Spearman rank order correlation methodological strategy. Santana concluded that most of the Venezuelan immigrants in Colombia had arrived because of the reverse migration of Colombians from Venezuela since they are descendants of Colombian repatriating.

I followed Santana, assuming that the Colombian departments from which emigration left to Venezuela has a high concentration of people registered by the RAMV. The relationship between the ranges of the two variables is high (0.85) so we can deduce that most of those included in the RAMV are descendants' born in Venezuela of Colombians parents returning with them as Santana suggested in his early study. It is not a coincidence that 56% of those

registered in the RAMV came from four Venezuelan states (Capital District, Carabobo, Táchira and Zulia), where 60% of Colombian migrant's families live.

Returnees complaints surface in interviews. I met in a friend's house Berlis, where she was working as a domestic. She was introduced to me by their Colombian high strata employees as the "Venezuelan maid". This is an odd narrative practice in Colombia. Colombians and their descendants coming from Venezuela, in everyday talks, are called Venezuelans for unknown reasons. They are also named Veneco, a pejorative term which translate as a Venezolanized Colombian.

In the interview, she told me that she was not Venezuelan but Colombian born. Her family (5 persons) moved from Colombia to the Sur del Lago in Zulia state when she was an adolescent. She worked as a domestic and then in the kitchen of a public school, her husband (Colombian born in Barranquilla) was a mason. They had three children, all girls born in Venezuela, one of them studying in the University (19-year-old) and one underage pregnant," because she is a rebel girl", now living with the Grandma. They moved to Barranquilla, Colombia, living in a slum called Villa Caracas, because Maduro "ruined" all good thing that Chavéz did for poor people, particularly Colombians. She lived undocumented in Venezuela until "Chavéz came along and gave me the papers as a Venezuelan citizen". She said having hard times because the lack of work in Barranquilla. Her husband could not find a stable job, so they had to move to Bogotá and brought the younger daughter (12 years old) from Venezuela to ease Grandma burdens. Civil servants in Bogotá treated her as a Venezuelan and not as a Colombian national. She described her experience in the civil register office as disappointing. She went to register her daughter so she could go to school, but they asked Berlis to abandon first the Venezuelan citizenship. She did not do it and thus her daughter

was illegal and all day hidden in the small rented room where the family lived in Bogota, afraid that she could be deported. Last time I followed the interview, she told me they will move back to Barranquilla since her husband did not have more work as a mason in Bogota and living in the city was very expensive and her salary was not enough to pay rent and other expenditures.

Camila, a second generation Colombian, has a job in a small food-coffee shop in a gas station in northern Bogotá, as a store worker serving coffee and selling groceries. She is the daughter of Colombian parents from Norte de Santander and married with a son of Bogotano parents. Camila and her husband were born in Táchira state in Venezuela. They moved to Bogotá in 2017, and like many second generations had many obstacles to get the Colombian citizenship.

She encounters many bureaucratic barriers. Camila recalls that her father register her birth in Venezuela using his Venezuela ID and this was enough for the bureaucracy to refuse repeatedly her registration as a Colombian citizen. But she was unworried since she told me that most of her friends in the *Barrio* were having many complications to register their birth certificate. For a while she lived irregular and then she got with her Venezuelan passport the PEP (Permiso Especial de Residencia) a special temporary authorization for Venezuelans migrant. Finally, she saved enough money to travel to Cucuta and with the help of her uncles and “good look” she got the Colombian certificate of citizenship. As others second generation Colombians, I spoke too, Camila feels socially rejected and marginalized. It has produced a strengthening of their Venezuelan identity. Many will answer to the question of family origins by playing down their Colombians ancestry and emphasizing the place of birth. They feel like foreigners in their own land.

In Colombia predominates a narrow notion of nationality. It is intensely associated to soil as one of our informants, Mauricio, told me emphatically “to be a Colombian you must be born in Colombia and live in Colombia and that's all”. This deep-rooted archaic conception of nationality is shared by most people I spoke too, even my postgraduates’ students. As Koessel (2015) discussed, this tribal view of citizenship is most likely the consequence of the conservative mentality of Colombian society, product of the geographical isolation of population in mountain enclaves and the fact that Colombia is the country in the Americas with the lowest immigration rate in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries⁴². Arraiz Lucca (2016) considers that the biggest problem of Colombia is the social exclusion of black and native people, poor, child of migrants, foreigners and so forth. Indeed, Colombian descendants and returnees coming from Venezuela are left out of the imagined national community and targets of an intense hostility and denial.

In this sense, a long colloquy with Sandra was enlightening. She is a lawyer graduated from a top private Catholic University, born in the city of Barranquilla and married with an important member of a Bogota traditional conservative families. She is acquainted with Venezuela since an uncle lives in the city of Maracaibo. When I asked her about Colombian returning home. She explained that Colombia does not have the “money” to help them. She remarked, “we sent all these poor people to Venezuela” because they (Venezuelans) had the “money” to take care of them. She concluded her commentaries emphasizing “these poor folks (Colombians) should better go back to Venezuela”. She expressed a point of view, I repeatedly heard in conversations with high social stratum Colombians, but also with middle

⁴² For the reasons for the low immigration rate to Colombia see: Smitmans, M. Hernández L. and Iregui T. 2010

class students, a fear of an *impoverished surplus population*. The returnee population is perceived as a potential source of recruitment for criminal bands and a drain on financial resources. Colombia is a country of Malthusian ideology, only the power elites and a circle of employers and servants close to them are full citizens, the urban and rural lower social classes are, at best, second class citizens but as a rule they are perceived by high and middle social strata as a mass of human disposable surplus⁴³.

I interviewed persons from two migrant groups (Italians and Venezuelans), most shared an unenthusiastic opinion of Colombian society. The words most used to describe it were unreceptive and lack of opportunities. Antonio, one of our Venezuelan informants, was an exception. He is married with a Colombian born in Venezuela working in a local branch of a United States Corporation. Yet when asked about working opportunities, he said “well, that is difficult, I am responsible for household work and our children’s”.

What I learned from interviews, conversations and my participatory observation is that Colombians proletarian families repatriating from Venezuela are an “undesirable” social group because they bring with them many material needs. They are dispossessed of their national identity in censuses and portrayed as aliens in mass media.

Many are the outcomes of a process of denationalization. A direct one is the inflation of the number of Venezuelans by counting double citizen only as Venezuelans and thus suggesting a humanitarian crisis and a military intervention⁴⁴. As Hanson says:

⁴³ Venezuelan historian Arraiz Lucca (2016) who lived and worked as a Professor in the Universidad del Rosario, for three years, in an essay about both countries came to the conclusion that the mass of Colombian people was, he used a metaphor, like an abandon child.

⁴⁴Not only the so-called Venezuelan exodus has been used to promote a multinational military intervention, ex-National Security Adviser John Bolton threatened that the United States could act

Migration data is often politicized and used to justify policies that themselves violate human rights. For example, migration statistics in the United States have been used to push for draconian legislation, increased border security, and the criminalization of immigrants. In the case of Venezuelan emigration, estimates have been used to justify misguided sanctions and even potential military intervention... (Hanson 358)

Then there is an economic dimension to this agenda, by denying the Colombians returnees of their national status the Colombian state passes on the welfare cost of this surplus motion on to the International community donors.

Documents elaborated by the World Bank or OIM on Venezuelan migrant stock shows the limits of quantification⁴⁵. They combine data taken from different Latin America countries using multiple and heterogeneous method, and do not clearly differentiate between repatriated, descendants, double citizenship, circular movement and migrants. They also show a lack of knowledge about the history of this migrant corridor, and an ineptness to distinguish between Venezuelans and Colombians nationals, perhaps because both populations speak Spanish and are ethnically very close. But these documents are significant inasmuch as their real goal is to raise financial assistance and to promote the application of the R2P doctrine.

The failure of the “humanitarian crisis case” has produced a change in the Trump administration regime change policy strategy⁴⁶. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro was

militarily to protect as many as 50,000 Americans living in Venezuela. (Wong 2019) adding that Venezuelan oil could be good for United States economy and Oil Corporations.

⁴⁵ For the limits of migratory international statistics see Scheel and Ustek-Spilda (2019)

⁴⁶ About the dynamics of Regime Change see the Libyan case which is very close to the Venezuelan one in Forte (2012), when it comes to the formation of an Alliance between the largest occidental powers, ONGs, big media Corporations and the application of the R2P to replace Gadhafi. For the

indicted for narco-terrorism and warships send to the Caribbean coast of Venezuela to stop illegal drugs. Even if the reports done by the U.N., DEA and a study done by the zealous anti-Bolivarian revolution Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) shows that close to 93 percent of cocaine consumed in the United States comes from junior partner Colombia and 84 percent is exported or moved from the Colombian Pacific via Central America and Mexico⁴⁷.

The last consequence is a psychological projection in Colombia, on pretended Venezuelans or real ones of all accusations endure by Colombians migrants in Venezuela and other Latin American countries⁴⁸ thus making a dangerous xenophobic atmosphere particularly for Colombians returnees⁴⁹.

Reverse immigrations are frequent and sometimes traumatic events in times of crisis. Already during the crisis after the first oil boom (1974-1983), close to 100,000 Colombians returned home from Venezuela. There are also historical examples of such events. During the Great Depression of 1929, between 500,000 and 1 million Mexicans, including many born in the United States, left the country either under pressure or voluntary (Hoffman 1974). The high levels of unemployment in Spain, because of the crisis in 2008, triggered the net emigration of 500,000 foreigners and descendants (López de Lera 2016). Saudi Arabia, an oil exporter country like Venezuela, forcefully expel foreign workforce when oil prices diminished

Guaidó fiasco see Wood (2020). For a long list of Fake News to manufacture consensus for regime change in Venezuela see Macleod (2018)

⁴⁷ Ramsey and Smilde (2020)

⁴⁸ See Semana (2014).

⁴⁹ In October 2018 a man was lynched by a mob in Bogotá accused of being a Venezuelan and a criminal. But he was neither a criminal nor Venezuelan, but a Colombian returnee with two children's and a wife. See, Que Pasa (2018)

(Gonçalves 2019) to safeguard native population from unemployment and economic hardship.

In the latest events we do not see the Latin American repatriating from Spain during the financial crisis of 2007–08, or Ethiopian abandoning Saudi Arabia during a downturn in oil prices, being called by academicians or multilaterals like IOM: Spaniards or Saudi Arabians nationals, but Colombians, Peruvians, Ecuadorians, Spaniards, Italians and so forth leaving Venezuela are registered by multilateral and in academic papers as Venezuelans nationals. A simple trick to inflate numbers ⁵⁰.

The cases mentioned above illustrate the notion of expansion by extensive expulsion of economic kinopower type “in the sense that economics strives for the free arrangement and movement of things with a minimum of territorial, political or juridical restriction and with a maximum of equilibrium”. In consequence, in all instances, we can identify a common denominator, that of a mobile surplus population expelled because of social motion contraction.

What are the reasons for the departure of Colombians from Venezuela? The principal one is the economic contraction in Venezuela because of falling oil prices and production. This contraction is followed by the formation of a surplus motion.

However, there were actions taken by government on to expel Colombians. First, the suspension and then elimination of foreign exchange subsidized remittances to Colombia, in 2014, which affected over 200,000 Colombians that each month used to send money transfer

⁵⁰ According to U.N. data there were more than 50,000 Venezuelans in Italy but the ISTAT (Italian Institute of statistics) only registers 9,000, so is the difference double citizens and thus registered by ISTAT only as Italians?

back home⁵¹. Second, as mention before, the closing of the frontier between August 2015 and August 2016 with the expulsion of several thousand Colombian families, producing panic in the community. Third, the annulment of temporary national identity documents issued during the Chávez government and the exclusion of many Colombian migrants from the social aid distributed by the Venezuelan State. Help now delivered through a digitalized social card associated to the national ID number card. Fourth, the revolutionary government accused Colombians and their descendants of being *bachaqueros*⁵², an informal economic activity characterized by the resale on the streets of subsidized basic products at prices that exceed many times the official prices. They were frequently taken out of queues to buy food or medicines, their documents destroyed and intimidated to leave the country by the Army National Guard. Finally, many middle-and upper-class Venezuelans, important employers of Colombian workforce, have emigrated to the United States and Europe leaving many Colombians jobless in a deeply depressed economy.

Conclusions

To sum up, the Colombian emigration to Venezuela has been a social experience where all different modes of circulation (kinopower), expulsion strategies and their associated political figures are traceable as in the Mexican- United States case. It has implied a scape valve for the internal conflict of Colombia by lowering social pressure through a robust and incessant export of surplus population. Of equal importance, the Colombian labor force has been

⁵¹Maduradas (2014)

⁵² Colombians became a scapegoat, even the biggest opposition Union, CTV (Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela) did a study disclosing that 10,000 unauthorized or unemployed Colombians worked as *bachaqueros* in the streets of Caracas see: Notimex (2017). The newspaper *El Colombiano* alerted that those Colombians re-selling subsidized products on streets were running the risk of losing their Venezuelan citizenship. *El Colombiano* (2014)

helpful for Venezuelan economic expansion and middle-and upper classes comfort by having at hand a low-paid industrial reserve army.

Colombian emigration to Venezuela is because of violence in Colombia, which is integrated into the institutional arrangements to reproduce the social system, and inequality due to wealth concentration and accumulation by dispossession interlocked with oil income cycles and labor demand in Venezuela.

The “Venezuelan exodus” is a complex issue. The economic crisis made by the errors committed by the Bolivarian revolution, exacerbated by regime change policies of financial and trade blockade well discussed by Weisbrot and Sachs (2019) has generated extreme anxiety, economic deprivation of basic things and induced expulsion of social motion.

Most of the people departing, under pressure and voluntary, in this border corridor, are proletarian Colombians families that include a substantial number of their Venezuelan born descendants. We do not know the exact numbers. Moreover, seventy-five percent of those we interview or have long conversation in the last three years in Bogota and Barranquilla were Colombians returnees or descendants. Although this is not a representative example, we believe that this proportion is very close to reality. They do not necessarily remain in Colombia; they also re-emigrate to other destinations with their Venezuelans passports. With most returning Colombians families, denationalization seems to be the best option for Colombian government ruling elites to govern them as a stateless precarious social surplus and use their plight to raise international financial help.

The politics of the Colombo-Venezuelan migratory corridor shows how migrations are a multifaceted non-linear social-political phenomenon with many angles, including now days’

geopolitical motivations associated to regime change. Migration is a hybrid experience where political and social forces, different techniques of expulsion and figures coexist and interrelate.

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