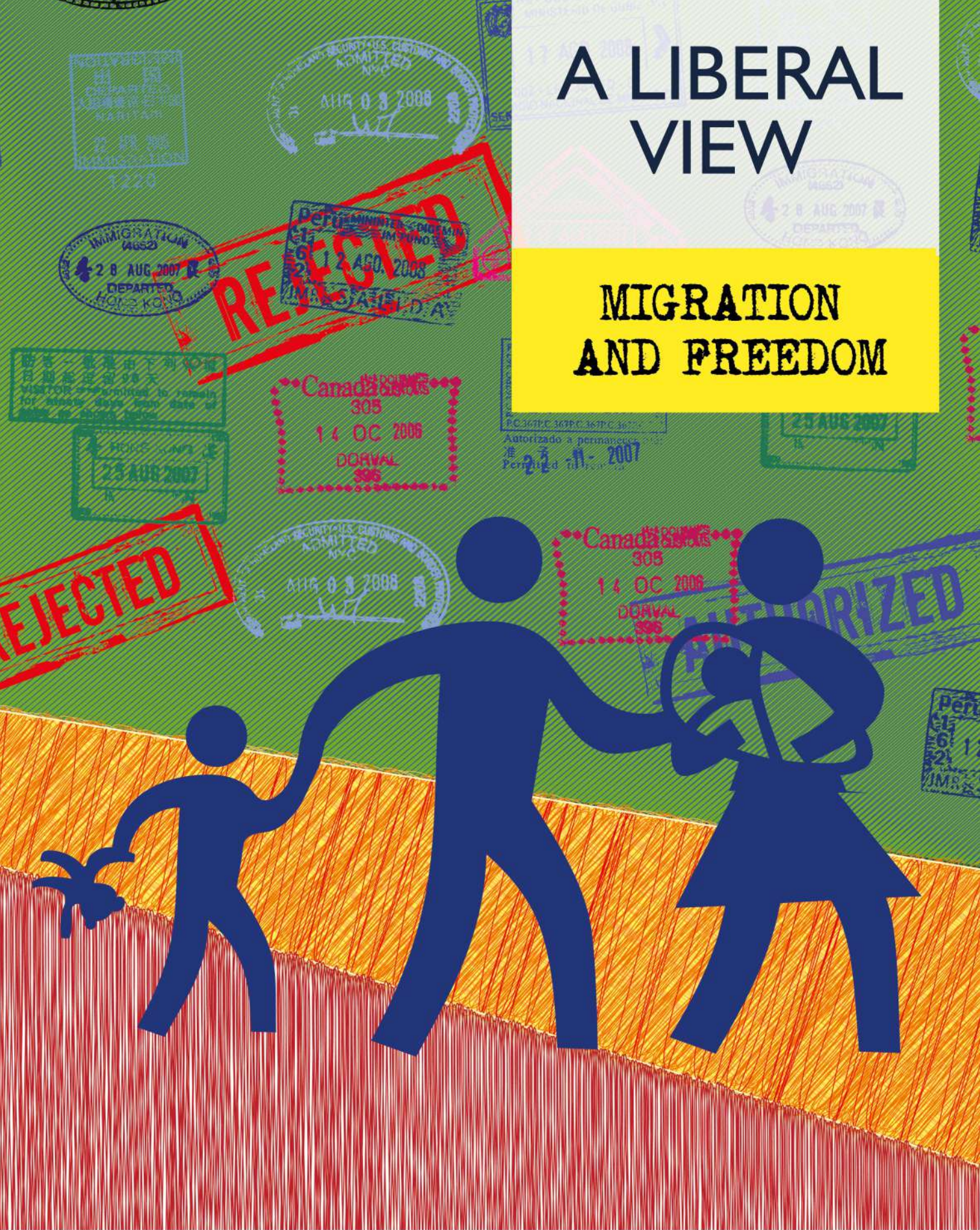
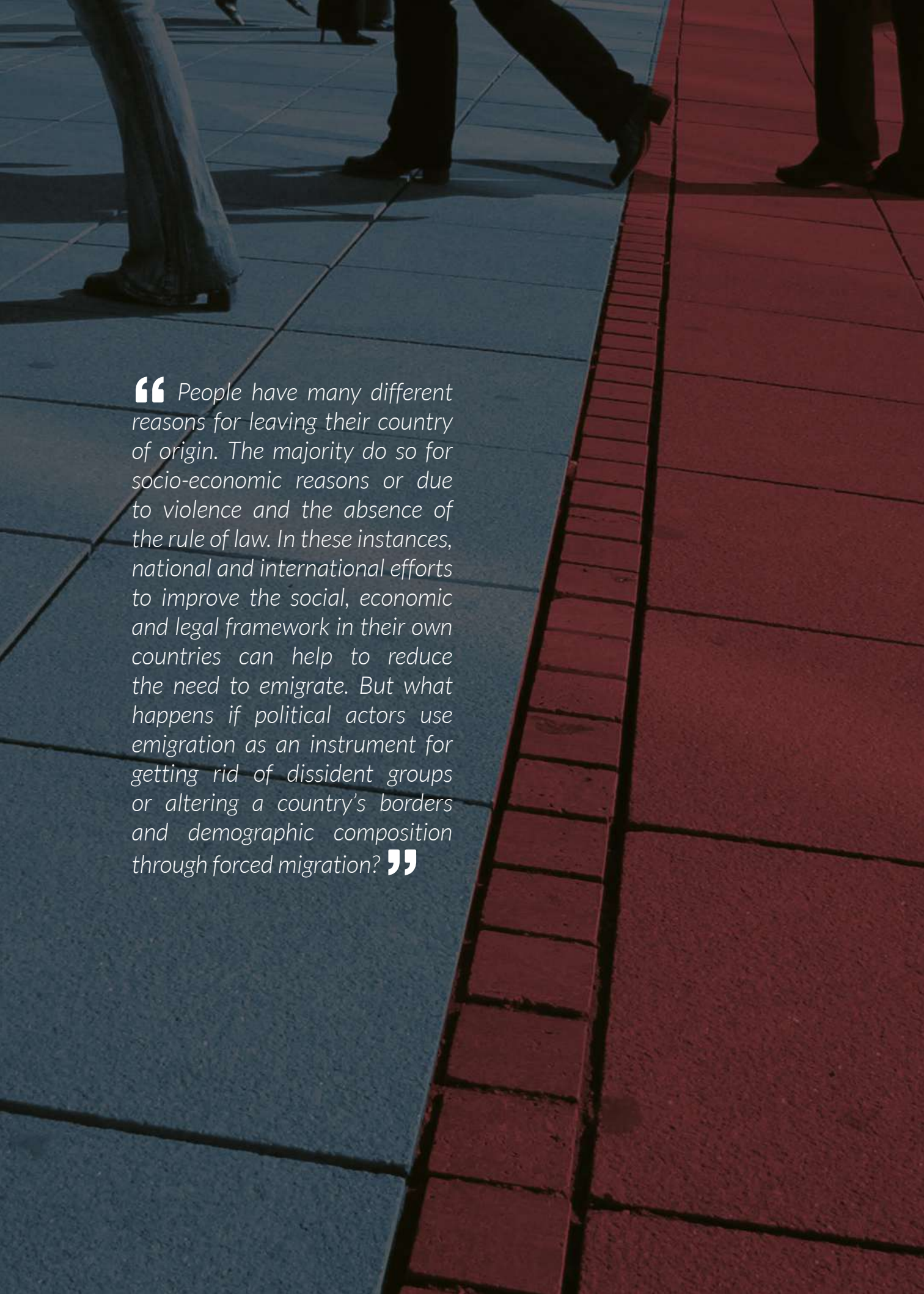


A LIBERAL VIEW

MIGRATION AND FREEDOM





“ People have many different reasons for leaving their country of origin. The majority do so for socio-economic reasons or due to violence and the absence of the rule of law. In these instances, national and international efforts to improve the social, economic and legal framework in their own countries can help to reduce the need to emigrate. But what happens if political actors use emigration as an instrument for getting rid of dissident groups or altering a country’s borders and demographic composition through forced migration? ”

Introduction

Liberty in an age of migration...

Birgit Lamm

Regional Director Latin America, FNF - RELIAL
Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, México City.

Twitter: [@BirgitLamm](https://twitter.com/BirgitLamm)

Migration is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon. It is currently once more at the forefront of the public and policy debate due to the large numbers of refugees coming to Europe from the Middle East and the proclamations about illegal immigration to the United States that pepper the discourse of the new US administration. Why has this debate suddenly become so controversial?

From an economic perspective, migration isn't a problem at all. Economic models clearly demonstrate that free migration improves efficiency in a globalized world. In the age of globalization, the free movement of people is just as indispensable for increasing global welfare as free trade and international investment. In economic terms, migration reduces the oversupply of labour in the countries of origin and helps to address labour shortages in the destination countries. In the medium term, this leads to greater efficiency as far as the advantages of international specialization are concerned, benefiting both the countries of origin and the destination countries. In other words, the more open our borders, the more prosperity for us all.

However, despite these benefits of migration, many people in the destination countries of Europe and the United States are deeply worried about immigration. Their reasons are either connected to the increased demand for public resources such as healthcare services, education and welfare benefits or are simply related to deep-seated prejudices and myths and emotional concerns linked to questions of identity, as highlighted in the articles on the situation in Germany and the United States. These concerns – known by economists as “social externalities” – are entirely arbitrary and are based on people's own individual judgements. As a result, they are difficult or even impossible to measure. Nevertheless, it is these myths and constructs of values and identities that are dominating the current political discourse in Europe and the US.

Obviously, nobody likes having to migrate and leave behind their family, social network or language and culture. As Carlos Alberto Montaner points out in this issue, the reason people leave is to seek opportunities for a better life because they have lost all hope of building the life they want in their country of origin. Migrants are generally the most enterprising people, the ones who are prepared to take risks – in a nutshell, they are people who want to make things happen. This attitude can only benefit the economies in their destination countries. However,



“We live in an age of migration. That is something we aren't going to change. However, what we can do is meet our responsibility to treat migrants with dignity and explore ways of combatting the darker side of migration. Today, the administrative barriers to migration are often excessive, allowing semi-legal or completely illegal actors to take advantage of the situation.”

migrants don't only bring their aspirations with them – they also arrive with a backpack full of values and ideas about society, the family and the state that may not necessarily match the prevailing norms in their destination country. As a result, they also present their host societies with a challenge. To what extent are they willing to tolerate differences? Which principles are non-negotiable? As Alexander Görlach explains, it is questions of identity and legitimacy that lead to conflict. Nevertheless, discussing these issues in an open climate can also enrich a society's development.

People have many different reasons for leaving their country of origin. The majority do so for socio-economic reasons or due to violence and the absence of the rule of law. In these instances, national and international efforts to improve the social, economic and legal framework in their own countries can help to reduce the need to emigrate.

But what happens if political actors use emigration

as an instrument for getting rid of dissident groups or altering a country's borders and demographic composition through forced migration? How dictators, autocratic governments, asymmetrical actors like ISIS and guerrilla groups can be made to respect international agreements and the rule of law is a vexed question to which the answer has yet to be found. Venezuela is currently the most prominent example in Latin America and María Teresa Romero paints an alarming picture of her country's situation in this issue of **A Liberal View**.

We live in an age of migration. That is something we aren't going to change. However, what we can do is meet our responsibility to treat migrants with dignity and explore ways of combatting the darker side of migration. Today, the administrative barriers to migration are often excessive, allowing semi-legal or completely illegal actors to take advantage of the situation, as Elena Toledo explains in her article on Honduras. Migration and migrants are not illegal per se. But the lack of transparent processes and safe migration routes forces many migrants to resort to the structures of organized crime, thus becoming involuntarily caught up in it themselves. They are susceptible to all kinds of abuse on the perilous journey to their destination country. They risk their lives to get there and in the process often get themselves or their families into debt. The cost of an undocumented passage from Central America to the United States – which was \$6,000 in 2016 – doubled after Donald Trump announced his intention to build a wall. But erecting barriers won't prevent migration. All it will do is increase the risks for migrants and put more money in the pockets of the “coyotes” and corrupt officials that they encounter along the way.





Seven aspects of migration

Carlos Alberto Montaner
Member of the Honorary Board of RELIAL

Twitter: [@CarlosAmontaner](https://twitter.com/CarlosAmontaner)

One of the key reasons behind the UK's decision to leave the European Union was the arrival of large numbers of immigrants fleeing the wars in Syria and other Islamic countries. Meanwhile, Angela Merkel's popularity ratings have taken a hit as a result of her generous offer to take in tens of thousands of these refugees. Donald Trump's victory in the US election was in no small measure due to his anti-immigrant discourse in a country with some 11 million undocumented immigrants. A significant proportion of American voters welcomed the idea of building a wall on the Mexican border, since these largely uneducated Spanish-speaking peasants with their indigenous looks fill them with unease.

In short, "irregular" immigration is threatening to destroy the political institutions of various First World countries and is fuelling a resurgence of nationalism and its bastard son, xenophobia.

These attitudes are nothing new. Racism is one of the strongest and most enduring characteristics of the human race. All the same, it is important to properly understand some of the key aspects of the phenomenon of migration. All of the observations below are a simple matter of common sense.

One

Almost nobody likes having to emigrate. If people leave the land where they were born to settle in another country under a different flag, it is because they have lost all hope of a good life in their country of origin. As a rule, it is the most enterprising people who emigrate, the people who feel the "fire of the immigrant" burning within them and wish to build a better life. The one thing that attracts immigrants above all else is a country where the opportunity of social mobility is guaranteed by the rule of law.

Two

Central America is a case in point. While millions of people have fled their native countries of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala for the United States, hardly anyone from Panama and Costa Rica has joined this exodus, since these two Third World countries enjoy a relatively high level of development. Despite the pockets of poverty, genuine social mobility exists in both Panama and Costa Rica and people there have the opportunity to get ahead in life. That is why thousands of Venezuelans now live in Panama, having fled the Chavistas' authoritarian collectivism in their home country. It is also why hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans settled in Costa Rica

“Racism is one of the strongest and most enduring characteristics of the human race. All the same, it is important to properly understand some of the key aspects of the phenomenon of migration. All of the observations below are a simple matter of common sense.”





Boy in Havana. Autor: S. Mercado

in order to escape the Sandinista regime, especially during the 1980s, when Nicaraguan society learned the true meaning of the Cuban-Soviet utopia.

Three

It is not true that immigrants only come to live off the State. I have never come across anyone who left their own country just so they could draw the welfare benefits that First World nations generally provide

to the most disadvantaged people in society. However, I do know of some immigrants who, since their arrival, have grown accustomed to scraping out a meagre existence on these benefits. Doing so generally dissipates the creative drive that they had when they first came to the country, as well as angering the citizens who have to pay taxes in order to support them.

As Nobel Prize winner Gary Becker demonstrated in several of his works, there is no doubt that the effects of these benefits can be perverse. Far better to show the poor how they can escape poverty than to create a system of transfers that they will probably depend on for the rest of their lives and that will ultimately turn them into welfare slaves who gradually lose all their fight and abandon themselves to a life in violent ghettos where they receive just enough money from the state to eke out a wretched existence without needing to get a job. Far better, too, to stimulate support from civil society – and in particular from similar ethnic groups – rather than waiting for society as a whole to take action through government institutions.

Four

People who migrate to open, inclusive countries are not tempted to cut themselves off completely from the rest of society. They still tend to congregate in certain neighbourhoods and associate with their own kind, but if they have the opportunity to voluntarily learn their host country's language then they will do so, thereby beginning the process of assimilation. The third generations of these families are usually fully integrated. The worst mistake that a society can make is to deny these immigrants the chance to gain citizenship or to practise certain occupations and professions.

The academic Samuel P. Huntington feared that Mexican immigrants would not assimilate into American society and might even try to reunite the south of the United States with Mexico (since this land was seized from Mexico in the first half of the 19th century). But Huntington got it wrong – many third-generation Mexican Americans

“They still tend to congregate in certain neighbourhoods and associate with their own kind, but if they have the opportunity to voluntarily learn their host country's language then they will do so, thereby beginning the process of assimilation. The third generations of these families are usually fully integrated. The worst mistake that a society can make is to deny these immigrants the chance to gain citizenship or to practise certain occupations and professions.”





"Dreamers" in Virginia, EUA.

By: Photo courtesy of The Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations (VACOLAO'S FACEBOOK PAGE).

no longer even speak Spanish, even though they are in fact all the poorer for it. Speaking two languages and, if possible, having two cultures enriches people's lives and is not something that we should be afraid of.

Five

It is a mistake to only issue visas to as many immigrants as are required to meet the country's supposed needs and to restrict them to certain occupations. Doing so assumes that the economy is static and that a handful of bureaucrats can somehow know what type of immigrants the country needs. The market economy works by trial and error. This means that immigrants (who tend to start more small businesses than average compared to the rest of the North American population) will need to try out various business activities until they find one that they can make a living from. It is wrong to impose any kind of restriction on these experiments.

Six

It is not true that immigrants take the jobs of native workers. Immigrants create more jobs than they take away. And when unemployment is high, they stop coming, return to their countries of origin or go to other countries where they can make a useful contribution and get ahead in life. People do not take the difficult decision to emigrate without having first carefully researched the situation in the destination country.

It also makes little sense to restrict immigration to professionals who contribute a large amount of human capital. Obviously, a neurosurgeon or nuclear engineer can contribute much more to society than they take back from it and will bring very valuable human capital with them. But a humble 18-year-old agricultural worker skilled in



picking tomatoes or sowing lettuces also performs work that is essential to society, as do foreign workers who enable other people to go to work by caring for their elderly parents or looking after their children. In other words, all adult immigrants bring valuable human capital with them.



Members of the South Central Farm attending the immigrant rights march for amnesty in downtown Los Angeles California on May Day, 2006. The banner, in Spanish, reads “No human being is illegal”. Author: Jonathan McIntosh. CC-BY-2.5

Seven

Every country that receives immigrants needs to find an effective system for integrating newly arrived undocumented immigrants. The United States did so accidentally, by force of circumstances, through the “new immigration Act” passed by Congress in 1966 under the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson.

One year earlier, in 1965, Fidel Castro had triggered a wave of irregular migration by announcing that Cubans living in South Florida could come and evacuate their relatives from Cuba via the port of Camarioca in the province of Matanzas, not far from Havana.

3,000 Cubans came to Florida as a result. Faced with this situation, Johnson authorized the “Freedom Flights” that brought some 260,000 Cubans to the United States between October 1965 and April 1973.

Since these immigrants could not be sent back to Cuba because it refused to readmit them, the 1966 Act provided for their legal “adjustment” by granting them residency after they had been in the United States for one year and a day. This supported the new arrivals’ productive integration into US society, resulting in one of the most successful mass migration movements in American history.

Today, as the US attempts to find an acceptable answer to the problem posed by the multitude of undocumented immigrants currently living there, it would do well to take note of the imaginative solution that they came up with in 1966. It is by building bridges, not walls, that the problem will be solved, or at least mitigated.

“3,000 Cubans came to Florida as a result. Faced with this situation, Johnson authorized the “Freedom Flights” that brought some 260,000 Cubans to the United States between October 1965 and April 1973.”

Identity and Narrative in an Age of Global Migration

Alexander Görlach

Visiting scholar at Harvard University



Twitter: [@agoerlach](https://twitter.com/agoerlach)

One can easily argue that we are living in an era of history that our descendants will call an “age of identity”. Not only in the Western world, but all across the globe, societies are debating what it means to be a part of them. Hindu nationalists in India, for example, deny the Muslim minority in the country their identity as Indian. In their argument, India is a Hindu nation. The same holds true for European countries such as Poland, where the national narrative elevates the Catholic faith as paramount for the Polish identity. Accordingly, the country’s ruling party has explicitly stated that refugees of Muslim faith are not welcome, despite the fact that the Pope – the head of the Catholic Church, whose word is supposed to hold sway in Christian Poland – urged his flock across the Old World to take in these refugees as an act of Christian mercy.

“In the aftermath of 9/11, religion has become the key indicator of identity. But what religion are we talking about?”

In the aftermath of 9/11, religion has become the key indicator of identity. But what religion are we talking about? Clearly not one of spirituality and charity, as the Polish



9/11 memorial fountain in New York City.

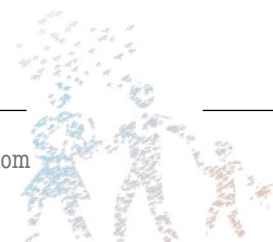
By: Ernest C. Smith, III (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0] (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

example shows. There is an interpretation of religion as politics in every developed faith and belief system that makes it not only an instrument of the ruling class, but also a way for the governed to find

their place in the world. Religion serves here as a “provider” for a third party (“God”) that is looking into and approving of the human enterprise.

This mechanism creates a feeling of belonging for both the governing and the governed. Building on this point, wherever the need arises to manage matters for a community larger than the family, order is needed – order that is established by force.

Force, however, needs to be legitimate. Religion, by giving reason to existence and structuring life, is the key human source of this legitimacy. Different religions have different claims to legitimacy, and these claims of legitimacy are mutually exclusive.





Muslim Family in the Reeds.

By: Michael Coghlan de Adelaide, Australia (Muslim Family in the Reeds) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>), , undefined

Since 9/11, the global dimension of these divergent political religions and their claims of legitimacy has become increasingly obvious. Since this event, global conflicts have been drawn along the lines of religion. It is primarily Christianity and Islam that are portrayed as the main antagonists in this era of identity differentiation. Samuel Huntington, the author of “The Clash of Civilizations”, rather dramatically describes future encounters between these two major religious communities as an “enterprise of bloodshed”. Of course, as a political theorist, Huntington does not view religions as a spiritual force, but rather as the political *Weltanschauung* that they embody. The discrepancy between these different *Weltanschauungen*, in Huntington’s opinion, inevitably leads to armed conflict.

Taking the identity conflict a few notches down, it can be seen that almost every major country in Europe has taken steps to define what their identity is and what makes, for example, the Germans German. Religion is always a key factor in this context. The concept of a German *Leitkultur* (literally “prevalent culture”) is based on the idea of a Judeo-Christian heritage that German culture, and indeed the whole architecture of the West, rests upon. This concept is, however, clearly not due to an admiration of the rich Jewish culture that once flourished in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. I would argue that its fundamental purpose is to make the Muslim diaspora in the West understand that they are not welcome.

Political religion can embrace all forms of polity. The acclamation of the populace is the affirmation of the rulership, regardless of whether this ruler is a king consecrated by the pope or a democratically elected leader.

Just like the ruler, the populace also wants to know that it is in the right place – that it too is legitimate as a corps. Consequently, the ruler and the ruled become sacred, favored by destiny. This idea is, for instance, still of central

importance in England where a form of exceptionalism has been cultivated over a long period of time. This exceptionalism is subsequently translated into secular, civil-religious or quasi-religious forms, all of which share a single goal: for the parts of the whole, the populace, to relate to them, to understand the narratives so that they feel a sense of belonging. The consequence is the people's loyalty to the rulership and to the political system in the place where they live.

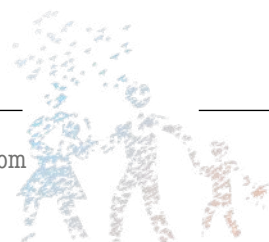
This is why migrants are perceived as dangerous: they have the potential to destabilize the system because they cannot read its particular inventory or participate in the life of the *res publica* as the majority knows it. Furthermore, these migrants cannot be controlled by the prevailing system, since the established mechanisms of force may not apply to them. According to the far right and their populist leaders, the main argument against Muslims in Europe is that their Muslim culture doesn't fit into the Christian, Occidental framework. It is about the loyalty of the migrants. The idea behind all these narratives of belonging is to turn one's own group ("us") into a monolith. In order to do this, there must be others ("them") that pose a threat to the wellbeing of your own group. Muslims are "the other" in many parts of the Western world today.

It is not easy to wrap our heads around the fact that the idea of "us" versus "them" seems to be embraced widely by both rulers and governed. At this moment in history, we may be witnessing a new period of migration such as those that have occurred repeatedly in the past. "Germany" is translated as *Allemagne* in French and *Alemania* in Spanish, which literally means "all men". After the collapse of the Roman Empire, so many tribes flooded into the country that they became indistinguishable to the outsider. As a result, they simply called them "all men".

Maybe this time, where migration is a global phenomenon that leaves no country or religious identity untouched, the outcome of all the hardship endured by migrants will ultimately be a global identity where we refer to one another as "all humans".

“This is why migrants are perceived as dangerous: they have the potential to destabilize the system because they cannot read its particular inventory or participate in the life of the *res publica* as the majority knows it.”

Alexander Görlach is a visiting scholar at Harvard University where he carries out research in the field of politics and religion at both the Center for European Studies and the Divinity School. He holds PhDs in linguistics and comparative religion. Görlach is a Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Council on Ethics in International Relations and an op-ed contributor to the New York Times.





Brazil: the country of immigrants

Marcelo Faria
ILISP think tank

Twitter: [@msfaria](https://twitter.com/msfaria)

One of the main aspects of Brazilian culture is the strong interaction among different ethnicities throughout history. Inhabited by indigenous peoples before it was discovered and colonized by Portugal, Brazil was one of the main destinations of African slaves from the 16th to the 19th centuries and subsequently received millions of European immigrants. In other words, immigration has played a fundamental part in shaping Brazilian culture.

Prior to Brazil's discovery, our country was inhabited by indigenous peoples. According to the most recent estimates, Brazil had an indigenous population of 2.4 million, composed of numerous different tribes (including the Aimoré, Caeté, Carijó, Guarani, Tupinambá and Tupi) that were permanently at war with each other. This constant state of conflict made it easier for the Portuguese to colonize the country.

Following Brazil's discovery by Pedro Álvares Cabral in 1500, there were many decades of wars and alliances between the Portuguese and different indigenous tribes to drive off other European countries keen to colonize the country. French colonists did succeed in establishing a presence in Rio de Janeiro and along the northeast coast, while the Dutch also settled some northeastern coastal areas. Both left a cultural legacy that has survived to this day. More than 100,000 Portuguese immigrated to Brazil in the first two centuries after its discovery. Other important European nations during the colonial era included the Spanish, particularly people from the

south of Spain, together with Jews recently converted to Catholicism, known as the "new Christians".

African slaves of different ethnicities (including the Nago, Jeje and Hausa) were brought to the country between the 16th and 19th centuries to replace the indigenous workforce. Brazil received 4 million slaves – the highest number of any country in the Americas – to work in construction, sugar plantations, cattle farming and mining. After decades of libertarian campaigning against slavery in the 19th century, it was finally abolished in 1888. One year later, in 1889, a military coup overthrew the constitutional monarchy of the Empire of Brazil and proclaimed the First Brazilian Republic.

A similarly important influx of immigrants came to Brazil from various European countries other than Portugal. For example, 1,686 Swiss arrived in the state of Rio de Janeiro from 1819-1820,



Lithography of Pedro Álvares Cabral, the Portuguese navigator who discovered Brazil in 1500. By [pedro_alvares_cabral_01.jpg](#); Artist: Unknown; Publisher: George Mathias Heaton (1804 – after 1855) and Eduard Rensburg (1817–1898) derivative work: Vearthy (talk) - [pedro_alvares_cabral_01.jpg](#), Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11375218>



Barrio japonés de la ciudad de San Pablo, Brasil.

Por: Leticiascattini (Trabajo propio) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], undefined

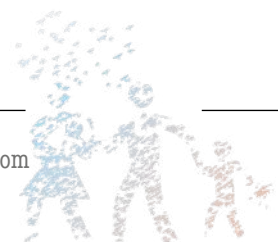
almost 250,000 Germans settled in the south of the country and nearly 1.4 million Italians came to work in agriculture and industry in the state of São Paulo. These immigrants had their tickets and initial accommodation subsidized by the Brazilian government, which also determined where they would work and live. As the immigrants themselves lacked the means to pay for their immigration, this public policy brought around 4 million people to Brazil in less than a century.

The Arabic immigrants comprised about 58,000 Christian Lebanese, Syrians and Egyptians who fled the Ottoman Empire in fear of persecution by the Muslims and settled mainly in the state of São Paulo. The Japanese constituted another important immigrant influx during the 20th century,

starting in 1908 after Italy banned subsidized emigration. It is worth mentioning that Japanese immigration encountered fierce opposition from local nationalist politicians for many decades and was almost banned by the National Constituent Assembly of 1946, with a ban only being averted by a casting vote.

All these immigration movements created a highly mixed population. According to the most recent census (2010), 43.1% of our population is made up of Brazilians with mixed ethnic ancestries, known as “*pardos*”. The white population, which accounted for 63.5% of the total in 1940, has now fallen to 47.7%, while black people account for 7.6%, Asians 1.1% and indigenous peoples 0.4%. Moreover, according to DNA studies, the Brazilian population in all regions of the country has predominantly European genes (60-70%), but even among the white population at least 10% of genetic markers are African.

“Despite Brazil’s historical openness to immigrants, their numbers fell significantly between the 1960s and the end of the 20th century.”



Despite Brazil's historical openness to immigrants, their numbers fell significantly between the 1960s and the end of the 20th century. During the 21-year dictatorship that followed the third military coup in Brazil's history, in 1964, the country received only a low volume of immigrants from Bolivia, China, Paraguay, Peru, Taiwan and some African countries. Moreover, the military dictatorship caused hyperinflation and continuous economic crises throughout the whole of the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, resulting in a Brazilian diaspora: over 1.8 million Brazilians left the country in the 1980s and a further 550,000 did so in 1990s. At present, approximately 3 million Brazilians live abroad, half of them in the United States.

“Most of the immigrants living here today are Bolivians: 105,420 are legal immigrants and it is likely that there is a similar number of illegals. The majority work for small textile businesses owned by Korean immigrants or their descendants in the city of São Paulo. Although their working conditions, they still earn enough to stay in the country and send some money back to their families.”

In the 21st century, however, the number of immigrants coming to Brazil has increased once more. Official data from the Federal Police of Brazil show that while just 25,825 immigrants came to the country in 2003, this figure increased by approximately 500% in 13 years, reaching 126,258 in 2016. There are currently 932,000 immigrants (0.46% of the total population) living in Brazil, 515,051 with temporary visas, 400,006 with permanent visas, 12,949 with border crossing visas, and 4,582 refugees.



Children in event. Por: <http://johnsonmatel.com/>

Most of the immigrants living here today are Bolivians: 105, 420 are legal immigrants and it is likely that there is a similar number of illegals. The majority work for small textile businesses owned by Korean immigrants or their descendants in the city of São Paulo. Although their working conditions, they still earn enough to stay in the country and send some money back to their families.



Haitian immigrant in São Paulo. Author: midianinja.

A further influx of immigrants began in 2004 when the United Nations Stabilization Mission

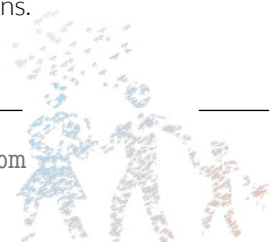
in Haiti, led by Brazilian forces, resulted in closer relations between the two countries and brought 60,560 legal Haitian immigrants to our country. The other Latin American countries that have contributed the largest numbers of immigrants to Brazil are Argentina (50,190), Colombia (37,420), Peru (33,260), Paraguay (32,020), Uruguay (28,680) and Cuba (18,370).

“One of the reasons for the low ratio of immigrants to native Brazilians is the restrictive and bureaucratic immigration legislation adopted in 1980 which is worse than in any other country apart from China.”

One of the reasons for the low ratio of immigrants to native Brazilians is the restrictive and bureaucratic immigration legislation adopted in 1980 which is worse than in any other country apart from China. Some immigrants have to wait about two years to convert a temporary visa into a permanent one in a process that requires them to visit multiple government agencies. If they fail to do so, they will not be granted a permanent visa even if they are working legally in Brazil. In recognition of this problem, in 2015 the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies voted in favor of a new Act aimed at reducing visa bureaucracy. The Act will now undergo a reading in the Senate, which is expected to pass it at some point in the next few months.

According to the official statistics, Brazil has a low number of refugees (4,582). However, this figure is set to rise in 2017. Although the country receives few refugees from Syria, the economic and political disaster caused by the socialist regime in Venezuela has led over 30,000 Venezuelans to emigrate to the state of Roraima in the north of Brazil in search of food, money and jobs. At present, it appears that this is the only group that is finding it difficult to integrate into Brazilian society. However, it is important to bear in mind that the number of Venezuelans arriving in Roraima exceeds the state's capacity to provide them with assistance. As a result, most of them have been living on the streets or in government-built shelters, selling handicrafts, begging or even working as prostitutes.

Free market ideas are gaining momentum in Brazil. As they start to be implemented, the country will move towards a society with more liberty, better economic development, greater respect for property rights and more employment opportunities for both the local population and immigrants. After all, the Brazilian hospitality that welcomes and helps immigrants from all over the world still runs through our veins.





The immigration crisis in Spain.

María Blanco
Academic Director of the **Fundación Internacional BASES**

Twitter: [@Godivaciones](https://twitter.com/Godivaciones)

Migration has been a constant feature throughout Spain's history. A destination for pilgrims, home to and exporter of political exiles and land of adventurers, for more than three thousand years people have come to Spain – not always in peace – in search of minerals, a strategic geopolitical location, sunshine and parties or simply a job. Since the arrival of the Phoenicians in the 11th century BC right up to the present day, the Iberian Peninsula has never been cut off, despite the best efforts of some monarchs and rulers to close its borders to the rest of the world, both politically and for trade.

“People weren't bothered if granddad's carer was a Moroccan woman or a male nurse from the Dominican Republic – what mattered was the work they did, far more than any cultural differences.”

However, during the first 17 years of the 21st century, immigration has gone from a phenomenon that fuelled economic growth to being perceived as a threat on various different levels.

Before the economic crisis of 2009, the positive effects of the migrant workers who came to Spain outweighed the negative ones. In the wake of the crisis, however, the image of immigrants has been tarnished by a dark shadow that reaches far beyond the economic domain.

Since the end of the 1990s, the ageing Spanish population had enthusiastically welcomed the boost to Spain's economic

growth provided by immigrants through their work and remittances. That this growth was based on an unsustainable property bubble is a separate issue. The fact remains that, thanks to its immigrants, Spain was able to increase production, improve educated women's access to the labour market and reduce regional disparities. Spanish nationals were able to stay in education for longer because lower-skilled jobs were being performed by workers from other countries who may in some cases have been overqualified but who needed to earn foreign currency to send back home to their families. Migrant workers also looked after young mothers' babies so that they could go back to work, as well as boosting the population in the poorest parts of Spain which, even though jobs were available there, were considered too remote by Spanish citizens who are very reluctant to leave their own region and would rather live on the dole than move away from their families.

The governments of the day fuelled this immigration boom through legislation that relaxed the entry restrictions. As a result, 78% of Spain's total population growth between 1998 and 2007 was due to immigration. It should be pointed out that these policies created excessive expectations among the people of neighbouring countries such as Morocco and the rest of North Africa. But the immigrants didn't only come from this region – they also started to arrive from poor countries like Senegal, despite the long and treacherous journeys that they had to endure. For these men and women, it was a matter of survival – they believed that however bad things might be in a city somewhere in Spain, it would still be better than literally dying of hunger in their own country. And they were correct in this assumption, as demonstrated by the fact that the number of immigrants arriving from these countries has not diminished.



Thus, as well as people coming in search of work, immigrants also started to arrive because they were attracted by the social welfare system (non-contributory pensions, healthcare, universal education financed by taxpayers...). Despite this, the public perception of immigrants remained positive. People weren't bothered if granddad's carer was a Moroccan woman or a male nurse from the Dominican Republic – what mattered was the work they did, far more than any cultural differences.

But this all changed completely when the financial crisis took hold, resulting in what I have called the “immigration crisis”.

In economic terms, the bursting of the property bubble and the emergency caused by the parlous state of the (publicly-run) savings banks resulted in a devastating and dramatic rise in unemployment which was now higher in Spain than in any other country in Europe, including Greece. Although unemployment fell from 22% to 18% between 2010 and 2017, it remains at a very high level both in absolute terms and compared to our European neighbours. And the picture gets even worse when you look at what lies behind the headline figure. Long-term unemployment is alarmingly high and families where everyone is unemployed have started to become a major social problem, something that only a few years ago would have been inconceivable. These lower middle class families have had to go back to live with their grandparents, leave the city for rural areas or even split up so that at least one out of the husband and wife can earn a few euros. People in Spain simply aren't accustomed to facing this type of situation.

As a result, immigrants stopped coming in search of work and many returned to their own countries, while Spanish nationals, particularly the young and well-educated, started emigrating. In spite of this, Spain remained an attractive destination for people seeking free handouts from the welfare state, primarily from former Soviet bloc countries like Romania and from sub-Saharan Africa.

The mix of immigrants coming to Spain today is extremely diverse. In addition to the groups mentioned above, huge numbers of Chinese are arriving to work in their own small businesses, as well as people from Muslim countries fleeing the armed conflicts there. These include the special case of refugees from the war in Syria, a problem to which there are no easy answers. Each country must decide for itself how many Syrian refugees it is prepared to take in.

But above all else, the one thing that characterizes the immigration debate in Spain in 2017 is the misguided association in people's minds between immigration and Islamist terrorism, a misconception that is regrettably reinforced by the coverage in the media. If the terrorists' goal is to create panic among the public, then sadly it would appear



Boat People at Sicily in the Mediterranean Sea.

By: Vito Manzari de Martina Franca (TA), Italy (Immigrati Lampedusa)

[CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

“The mix of immigrants coming to Spain today is extremely diverse. In addition to the groups mentioned above, huge numbers of Chinese are arriving to work in their own small businesses, as well as people from Muslim countries fleeing the armed conflicts there.”



that they are being all too successful. The rise in anti-immigrant attitudes, however unjustified, can among other things be attributed to the fact that it is very hard to know whether or not a given individual has come to Spain in peace. The situation is not made any easier when terrorist sleeper cells are uncovered that have remained inactive for years while they gain the trust of the small communities where they live, only for these same people to turn on their TVs and discover that that nice young man upstairs has committed (or was planning) a terrorist attack.

But leaving this issue to one side and focusing purely on the economic arguments, those who call for restrictions on immigration in order to protect Spanish people's jobs are forgetting the lessons of economic history. The best way for a country to protect jobs is not by closing its political borders, but by increasing the productivity of its workforce, improving the quality of its human capital, promoting free trade and welcoming talent, wherever it may come from. That is how the United States was able to build a railroad stretching from the East to the West coast, it is how other countries have escaped from the mire of poverty, it is how the United Kingdom built an empire in the 19th century and it is also what Spain should do so that it can take advantage of the opportunities provided by its geopolitical position in order to once more become the melting pot of cultures that it has always been throughout its history.

“The best way for a country to protect jobs is not by closing its political borders, but by increasing the productivity of its workforce, improving the quality of its human capital, promoting free trade and welcoming talent, wherever it may come from.”



Immigrant demonstration.

By: Alfredo Sánchez Romero, Madrid, Spain () [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Is there such a thing as a “Latino identity” in the United States?

Allert Brown Gort

La Casa de la Universidad de California en México, A.C.



Twitter: [@allertbg](https://twitter.com/allertbg)

In the United States, the concept of “Latino” or “Hispanic” (the two terms are often used interchangeably) is a pan-ethnic social identifier for people originating in Latin America and their descendants. Importantly, their existence as a demographic group demonstrates how difficult it is to understand the US political system without exploring the role played by the interrelated concepts of “race” and “ethnicity”.

“Latino” is a pan-ethnic social identifier that encompasses populations of different national origins on the basis of geography or culture, used by both society at large and by government. The definition currently used by the Federal Government is provided by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB): ““Hispanic or Latino” refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.”

In the United States, the broadly accepted social definitions are still mirrored in governmentally crafted definitions of both “race” and “ethnicity”. Although it is now considered by scientists across the board that the

concept of race has no basis in biology, there is recognition that it is still an extremely powerful social concept. But despite the seemingly comprehensive formal definition of the term, this social identifier is not always an easy fit. Pan-ethnic identities are most often imposed by more dominant elements of society upon subordinate groups, “lumping” a number of distinct groups together in order to facilitate social control. The fluidity of this socio-political construct can perhaps best be seen in how the definition elides the participation of the Brazilian-, Haitian-, or even Philippine-origin communities, which are considered to be ‘Latino’ in some, though not all, areas of the United States. In other words, this is an ethnic group that is in the process of consolidation.

The core of the “Latino” pan-ethnic identity is composed of 19 separate groups that have distinct cultural characteristics and racial histories. Despite their differences, however, the “Latino” groups share certain features that serve as a common thread to the development of their identity. These include the Spanish language, the Catholic religion and Iberian culture. This process of convergence is aided by decades of increasingly integrated entertainment and media cultures.



By Joey Z1

“There are many reasons for the disparity between the size of this population and their political effectiveness, among them the high proportion of adults who are not US citizens, as well as the fact that those who are citizens tend to be younger, less educated, and have lower incomes than the population as a whole.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 56.6 million Hispanics currently live in the United States. People of Mexican origin form the largest group, accounting for almost two thirds (approximately 34 million) of Latinos in the country. They are followed by those of Puerto Rican origin, with 4.9 million mainland inhabitants and 3.5 million more residents of the island itself. Finally, there are five other Hispanic groups represented by more than one million people each: Cubans, Salvadorans, Dominicans, Guatemalans and Colombians.

The seeds of the current demographic change can be found primarily in the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Hart-Celler Act. This legislation represented a fundamental reordering of immigration law and was passed in the same spirit as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965, but also – in the context of the Cold War – with an eye to the United States’ image abroad regarding racial equality. It ended the era of restrictive quotas begun with the passage of the Quota Act in 1924, and it both opened the way to the largest influx of immigrants since the beginning of the 20th century and radically changed the mix of immigrants arriving in the United States.

But this renewed immigration was not the only reason for dramatic demographic change. As in all developed nations, the birth rate of the native-born began to drop around the same time, and the population as a whole began to age – to the extent that the White population is projected not only to decrease as a proportion of the total, but also to start decreasing in actual numbers as of 2030. In this context, the higher birth rate exhibited by the foreign-born has acquired even more importance, making the second generation the main motor of population growth. According to the Census Bureau, between 1993 and 2013, the number of US-born Latinos under the age of 18 more than doubled (increasing by 107%), compared with an increase of only 11% for under-18s in the general population. This growth in the second generation is occurring even in an era of reduced migration, such that while the number of Latino immigrants present in the country increased slightly in the five years between 2007 and 2012 (from 18 million to 18.8 million), their proportion as part of the overall Latino population declined, falling from 40% to 36%.

Despite its size, predictions about the political influence of this ethnic bloc have not yet been fulfilled. There are many reasons for the disparity between the size of this population and their political effectiveness, among them the high proportion of adults who are not US citizens, as well as the fact that those who *are* citizens tend to be younger, less educated, and have lower incomes than the population as a whole – all conditions that are well known in political science to limit voting behaviour.

In the long term, however, the “Latino” identity may still be determined more by external forces, i.e. by the actions of government and of society at large. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in recent years the directions





Murals in the back streets of the Latino Mission, San Francisco California USA. By: Alicia

taken by government and society have diverged in very significant ways. Since the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, government has generally striven for greater inclusion. Meanwhile, and perhaps as a reaction to what they see as undue favouritism or to a fear of loss of control, a significant number of Whites – and their number is increasing if the election of Donald Trump is anything to go by – have begun to adopt positions that are exclusionary.

The result is that, if the immigration debate continues to fall along sharply partisan lines in ever more extreme positions, we are probably seeing the beginning of a division of the American electorate as the political utility of the Latino pan-ethnic identity grows ever more obvious. That is to say that it would lock in the mutually reinforcing cycle of rejection, where politically heightened fears of the consequences of demographic change cause a negative immigration debate targeted at Latinos, who respond defensively by closing ranks around a unitary pan-ethnic identity in order to increase their influence as a group, which in turn begets more anxiety.

Without this sense of rejection, it is quite probable that most Latinos would – in the manner of so many immigrant groups before them – eventually become “White” and thus dispose of the problem. In other words, due to the inexorable forces of assimilation – integration, acculturation and intermarriage – the “Latino” pan-ethnic identification would cease to be functional, eventually evolving into yet one more “symbolic ethnicity”. Thus, ironically, it seems likely that it is precisely the fear of the demographic and cultural change that might occur when Whites cease to be the absolute majority of the population that is giving the Latino identity political validity – and perhaps even making it permanent.



The Honduran exodus isn't the problem

Elena Toledo
Fundación Eléutera

Twitter: [@NenaToledo](https://twitter.com/NenaToledo)

In Honduras, as in all the countries of Central America's Northern Triangle, there is currently a lot of confusion and uncertainty regarding the question of migration. The election of President Trump has focused even more attention on this phenomenon that some have described as a humanitarian crisis, but that I prefer to call an "exodus", since the people who leave their home countries do so almost literally in search of the promised land, heading for the United States in the belief that there they will find the prosperity that they so desperately need.

100 Hondurans currently leave their country every day to make the uncertain journey to the United States. In 2016, 21,587 Hondurans were deported from the US and over twice that number (47,678) from Mexico. It is estimated that 1.2 million Hondurans currently live in the United States. This figure is equivalent to 14% of the total population of Honduras.

The average cost of making the overland journey from Honduras to the US is around USD 4,500 per person. This sum is usually paid by family members and friends who have already emigrated and settled abroad, although the family members that the migrants leave behind in Honduras also have to pay additional fees, causing many of them to get into debt.

In the recent mass exodus to the United States, 19,000 unaccompanied Honduran minors made the journey there, as well as a further 21,000 family units, i.e. a minor accompanied by an adult. The Honduran migrant trafficking industry made USD 60 million from smuggling all these people. Although what they do is officially illegal, the traffickers run their business as if it were a multinational company, indeed almost as an effective and widely available "public service", with "branches" in Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico and the United States.

The "coyotes" who make their living from illegally smuggling Honduran migrants are not only tolerated by the government but are in fact the most visible vehicle for its official migration policy. They are freely able to start, facilitate or stop migrant movements wherever there is demand in the country. This is partly because the current "official policy" is in practice both unrealistic and lacking in transparency. It is not supported by even the minimum requirements in terms of the institutions, resources, programmes, projects, controls, incentives and evaluation mechanisms that are needed to deliver its goals and ensure accountability.

Although the government's official line is that its policy benefits migrants and their families, overall the people who profit the most from the business generated by migrants are the banks, credit unions, money transfer companies, currency exchange companies, importers and exporters of goods and foreign currency speculators

“In 2016, 21,587 Hondurans were deported from the US and over twice that number (47,678) from Mexico. It is estimated that 1.2 million Hondurans currently live in the United States. This figure is equivalent to 14% of the total population of Honduras.”





Migration in Tenosique. By: Repositorio Peninsula, Photo: Marilyn Alvarado Leyva CEPCHIS / UNAM

in Honduras. This is the reality, despite the Central Bank of Honduras' claim that its policies and regulatory framework in this area are geared "towards the country's growth, development and prosperity".

According to statistics published by the Central Bank of Honduras, the total value of the remittances sent to Honduras from abroad in 2016 was USD 4.5 billion. This constitutes a huge injection of cash for the country's economy.

Indeed, the annual income from remittances is greater than the combined income in dollars that Honduras obtains through traditional and non-traditional exports, foreign investment funds and aid. Annual remittance income is equivalent to one third of the Honduran government's annual budget and 15% of GDP.

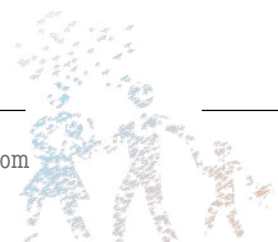
As a result of the above, for more than a decade remittances from abroad have acted as the main financial stabilizer of the Honduran economy, as the government, private sector and aid organizations never tire of telling us.

The problem

Migration of Hondurans to other countries has the potential to become an effective instrument for the country's development, although this is far from being the case today. In other words, the problem in Honduras isn't migration per se, but rather the type of migration that has prevailed ever since Hurricane Mitch devastated the country in 1998, triggering a mass exodus of Hondurans to foreign shores.

What are the features of this type of migration? It is poorly organized, illegal and expensive. It drains human resources from the country – and it has so far proven difficult to convince these people to return. Moreover, it involves serious human rights violations and has negative consequences for the migrants, their families, businesses, communities and the country as a whole.

Every day, we keep hearing and reading reports in the Honduran media about the abuse, mistreatment, extortion, kidnapping, exploitation and rape suffered by Hondurans migrating overland to the United States and elsewhere.



Moreover, the prevailing type of migration from Honduras to other countries isn't benefiting the country's private sector either. For this to happen, the private sector would need to transform itself into the principal generator and beneficiary of "knowledge remittances", i.e. the transfer of human and social capital using different types of resources acquired by migrants while working outside of Honduras.

There is always a demand for these resources in the migrants' country of origin. It has been shown that, in this age of globalization, the combination of financial and knowledge remittances as part of a national strategy for growth and development generates innovations, creates new types of business and increases companies' competitiveness, especially if they open up, restructure or expand their business.

The alternative

Honduras urgently needs to replace the prevailing type of migration with something that is very different, if not the complete opposite. As long as migration to other countries, particularly by those in search of work, remains under the control of the most nefarious private market actors and interests, as is currently the case in Honduras, migration will continue to be a problem for our country rather than a solution, even though it actually has the potential to become a powerful driver of the nation's growth and development.

For this to happen, the labour migration of Hondurans to other countries should be conceived, planned and directly managed by a private, non-profit, self-sustaining entity that operates in the public interest and has strong operational links to civil society organizations. A body functioning along these lines would be able to properly implement the government's current policy on international labour migration. The Honduran government would still regulate the sector, but would be accountable to watchdogs comprising prominent members of the public and leading migrant rights campaigners.

It is Honduran migrant workers and their families who should be the chief beneficiaries of the government's migration policy, followed by domestic enterprises and entrepreneurs and those foreign enterprises and entrepreneurs who take on Honduran migrant workers on a temporary basis but offer them the option of staying on for several years.

Managed in this way, the labour migration of Hondurans to other countries would become a key driver of the nation's development, generating codevelopment effects in this age of globalization. It would benefit both the migrant workers and Honduran and foreign businesses, as well as making a positive contribution to the Honduran economy at a macroeconomic and microeconomic level.

At the same time, the migration process itself would take place safely, effectively and in a manner that respected migrants' dignity. However, this will only happen when Honduras and all the other countries whose economies are highly dependent on the money that these courageous migrants earn in the United States stop blaming the US and whoever its current president is for the problems associated with migration and start thinking about what they can do domestically to provide these people with effective support without restricting their inalienable right to migration, development and individual prosperity.

“It is Honduran migrant workers and their families who should be the chief beneficiaries of the government's migration policy, followed by domestic enterprises and entrepreneurs and those foreign enterprises and entrepreneurs who take on Honduran migrant workers on a temporary basis but offer them the option of staying on for several years.”



Asylum policy in Mexico: myth or reality?

Melissa Ley Cervantes
El Colegio de la Frontera Norte



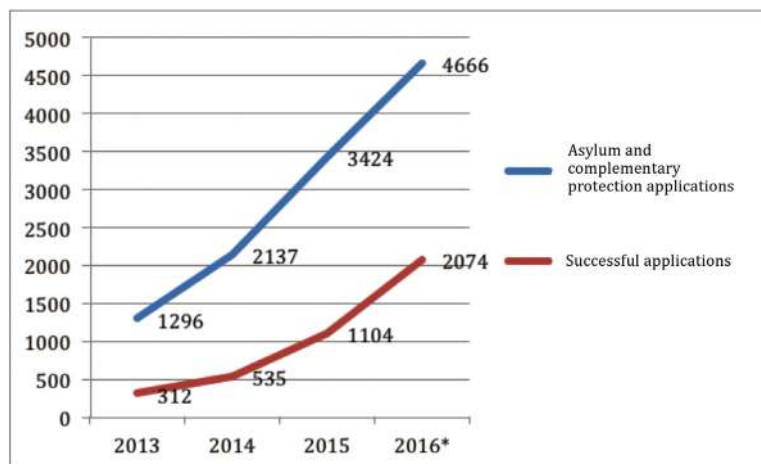
Twitter: [@MelissaRecht](https://twitter.com/MelissaRecht)

It was in 1939 that the myth of Mexico as a nation that welcomes people displaced by conflict first began. The Spanish Republican exiles who came to Mexico are the foremost example in our collective consciousness of the Mexican nation's compassion towards people fleeing war, violence and starvation. There is no doubting the significance of the fact that Mexico took in more than 20,000 Republicans during the Spanish Civil War, something that also had a notable impact on the country's cultural and scientific landscape. Less widely known is the fact that, during the 1980s, thousands of people displaced by the civil war in Guatemala were taken in by Mexico's southern border region and that it was this exodus that led to the establishment of the Mexican refugee agency COMAR so that applications for asylum and complementary protection in Mexico could be managed institutionally. Nevertheless, there is good reason to ask whether this solidarity is confined to one-off situations or whether it really is a tradition that forms an integral part of Mexican migration policy.

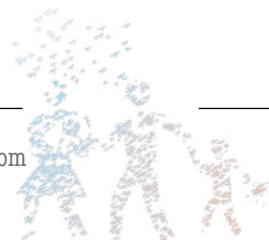
According to figures published by COMAR, the number of asylum and complementary protection applications rose by 360 percent between 2013 and the third quarter of 2016, with the number of successful applications increasing by 664 percent over the same period (see Figure 1). However, the number of people granted asylum or complementary protection in Mexico during the first nine months of 2016 was only just over 2,000. In other words, in spite of the large percentage increases, the actual numbers are rather modest, especially given that, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were more than one million asylum applications worldwide during the first half of 2016. Germany received the highest number of applications over this period (388,000), followed by the United States (112,000). The largest number of asylum applications in the United States were made by Mexicans (12%), followed by Salvadorans and Guatemalans (UNHCR, 2016).

Figure 1.

Number of asylum and protection applications and successful applications in Mexico (2013-2016*)



Source: COMAR (2013, 2014, 2015, January-September 2016)
Note: Since data for 2016 were only available up to September, the number of pending applications was deducted from the total number of applications



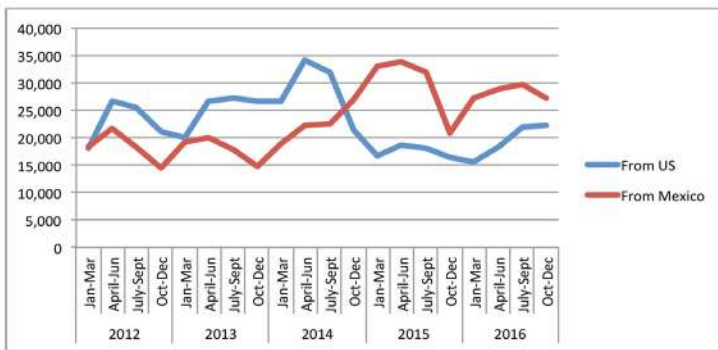


Children without borders. Photo: Quim Gil

Most of the people who apply for asylum and complementary protection in Mexico are from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. In fact, 94 percent of applications during the first nine months of 2016 were made by citizens of Central America's Northern Triangle countries. These figures are no coincidence, since it has always been the case that a significant proportion of Central American migrants trying to get to the United States must necessarily first pass through Mexico. What has changed in the past few years is that, with the establishment of the Southern Border Plan (Programa Frontera Sur), Mexico

is once again taking action to restrict the number of Central Americans migrating to the United States. This programme was launched in July 2014 with the primary objective of "bringing order" to migration. Figure 2 shows how, by the end of 2014, the number of deportations from Mexico to the Northern Triangle countries was greater than the number of deportations to these countries from the United States.

Figure 2. Migrants deported to Central America's Northern Triangle countries from Mexico and the United States 2012-2016



Source: El Colef et al. (2012-2016)

This rise in deportations by the Mexican immigration authorities has been accompanied by an increase in the number of people who end up stranded in Mexico, unable to make it to the United States because of the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult to cross Mexico and/or the US border. Although in our collective consciousness these migrants are passing through our country "in search of the American dream" – as if the only reason for their journey were to get a house in the suburbs or a pair of sneakers – in reality a high proportion of these women, men and children are among the 65 million people worldwide who have been forced to leave their homes. In Honduras and El Salvador in particular, violence and insecurity are of one the main drivers of migration.

In 2013, Honduras had the highest murder rate in the world (79 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants). This figure fell to 60 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2015, when El Salvador became the world's most dangerous country, with a rate of 116 murders per 100,000 inhabitants (Instituto de Medicina Legal, 2016). At the same time, according to the Survey of Migration at Mexico's Southern Border (Emif Sur), 31.5 percent of Salvadorans deported by Mexico in 2015 had left El Salvador due to violence and insecurity, compared to a figure of 25

“Most of the people who apply for asylum and complementary protection in Mexico are from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.”



percent in 2014. Although the percentages for Hondurans are lower, it is nonetheless significant that the number of people who left Honduras due to violence and insecurity rose from 3.5 percent in 2014 to 8.8 percent in 2015 (El Colef et al.).

In view of the above, it is hardly surprising that growing numbers of Hondurans and Salvadorans are leaving their countries in search of asylum and protection. There is no getting away from the fact that Mexico has been responsible for a dramatic increase in the number of deportations of Central American citizens, a large proportion of whom would have been eligible for protection and asylum both in the United States and in Mexico. It is thus perfectly reasonable to ask whether protection and asylum really do form an integral part of Mexican migration policy or whether they in fact only constitute an exceptional response to specific one-off events.

Table:

Reasons for leaving their country given by Central American migrants deported by Mexico, by country of origin

Reason	Country of nationality					
	Guatemala		Honduras		El Salvador	
	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
Lack of work or economic crisis in country of origin	65.5	80.1	68.5	48.2	45.8	62.3
Very low income and/or poor working conditions	29.2	12.3	25.8	36.5	26.7	5.4
Violence or insecurity in country of origin	0.2	0.1	3.5	8.8	24.4	31.5
Other *	5.2	7.5	2.2	6.4	3.1	0.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: El Colef et al. (2014-2015)



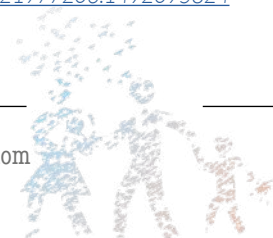
Mexico - Guatemala border in La Mesilla. Photo: Darío Ribelo

References:

COMAR (2013-2016) Estadísticas. URL: http://www.comar.gob.mx/work/models/COMAR/Resource/267/6/images/ESTADISTICAS_2013_A_02-2016_act.pdf

El Colef, STPS, CONAPO, UPM, SRE, CONAPRED, SEDESOL (2012-2016) Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Sur de México. URL: www.colef.mx/emif

UNHCR (2016) Mid-Year Trends 2016. URL: http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/58aa8f247/mid-year-trends-june-2016.html#_ga=1.68415891.321977206.1492095824





Mass emigration, another Venezuelan tragedy

María Teresa Romero
CEDICE Academic Committee

Twitter: [@mt_romero](https://twitter.com/mt_romero)

While the current government of Nicolás Maduro – like its predecessor under Hugo Chávez – refuses to publish any statistics, other countries' immigration records and various expert studies show that by 2015, two million Venezuelans had left their country since the “Socialism of the 21st Century” arrived there in 1999. Due to the steadily deteriorating political, economic and social conditions in Venezuela, this amounts to semi-forced migration.

In actual fact, people are now talking about much higher figures. It is thought that the number of Venezuelans living legally and illegally in the United States alone reached one and a half million in 2017. In 2015, the number of legal Venezuelan residents in the US was estimated at around 260,000, in itself already a huge increase compared to the figure of 33,000 in 1980. Also in 2015, the National Statistics Institute (INE) reported almost 20,000 cases of migration to Spain, 53% more than in 2014.

In Colombia, a recent article in the El Tiempo newspaper states that according to Colombia's Migration Office there are 40,000 Venezuelans living legally in the country and an estimated 60,000 living there illegally. However, Iván De la Vega – a sociologist, expert on Venezuelan migration and lecturer at Simón Bolívar University – led a study carried out in conjunction with his colleagues and students at the Laboratorio Internacional de Migraciones (LIM) which found that in fact 900,000 Venezuelans have come to Colombia over the past 20 years, equivalent to 1.8 percent of Colombia's total population (this figure includes people who have dual nationality). This phenomenon is attributed to the effects of the “Bolivarian Revolution” and the social crisis in Venezuela. <http://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/otras-ciudades/venezolanos-la-migracion-mas-grande-en-la-historia-del-pais-72872>

“ By 2015, 6-7% of the population had been involved in the mass emigration from Venezuela and that at least half of the population is indirectly affected insofar as they have family members or friends living abroad.”

The sociologist Tomás Páez of the Central University of Venezuela is the author of “La voz de la diáspora venezolana” (The voice of the Venezuelan diaspora), one of the few credible studies on this topic. He found that, by 2015, 6-7% of the population had been involved in the mass emigration from Venezuela and that at least half of the population is indirectly affected insofar as they have family members or friends living abroad. http://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2016-08-30/venezuela-emigracion-maduro-chavez-diaspora-petroleo_1252510/

These huge numbers are without precedent in Venezuela's history and are growing every day, as more and more Venezuelans migrate to over 90 countries around the world. This is an alarming trend, since its impacts are more negative than positive, not just for Venezuelan society but for the Americas as a whole and indeed for all the destination countries of this new wave of migration.



Huge variability in migrant living conditions

According to the experts, in the past the majority of Venezuelan migrants were young, middle-class, highly-qualified university-educated professionals who were able to find good jobs in their host countries. However, as Venezuela's political, economic and humanitarian crisis deepens – with the country currently experiencing among the highest rates of inflation, legal uncertainty and insecurity in the world – growing numbers of lower-class Venezuelans of all ages are now emigrating to other countries, many of them illegally. This has resulted in a pronounced deterioration in the average living conditions of the “Venezuelan diaspora”, with many people unable to access healthcare or find work.



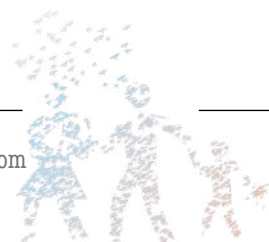
Venezuelan nationals arrive at J.C. Bermudez Park in Doral, Miami, Florida, October 5th, 2012, en route to New Orleans to cast their votes at the convention center to decide if Hugo Chavez should continue to be president. AFP PHOTO / Paula Bustamante

The US city of Miami is a case in point. Growing numbers of Venezuelan families have arrived there during 2016 and 2017, either seeking political asylum or remaining there as illegal immigrants. Many of these families have ended up sleeping in their cars or under bridges. This has resulted in action by the migration authorities, police and other government agencies and efforts by various Venezuelan groups to provide them with support. The United States (and other countries) are now considering the introduction of legislation to provide special assistance to Venezuelan migrants, as they did for Cuban immigrants in the past.

Without giving precise figures, the authorities in Curaçao and other Caribbean islands in the vicinity of Venezuela claim that during the past year there has been an alarming rise in the number of Venezuelan migrants coming to live there illegally. They are arriving by air and by sea, as tourists or even stowed away on fishing boats. There have been several reports on TV channels such as the US-Mexican Telemundo that have filmed these events.

Women migrants are among the worst affected groups. Destitute pregnant women are arriving in neighbouring Colombia on a daily basis, for example. To give some idea of the scale of the problem, 82 Venezuelan women received treatment at the Rafael Calvo maternity clinic in Cartagena during the first two months of this year alone. <http://blogs.eltiempo.com/campamento-de-los-mojados/2017/03/29/embarazadas-pobres-e-inmigrantes-una-travesia-de-venezuela-a-colombia/>

In Colombia, as in many other countries, Venezuelan women often work as prostitutes. The most recent report by the Panama office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) highlights an increase in the number of women coming from Venezuela to work as prostitutes in Panama. It adds that this trend should be carefully analysed to determine how these women are getting to Panama and whether they are working as prostitutes out of choice or because they have fallen into the hands of human traffickers. <http://elestimulo.com/climax/venezuela-exporta-prostitutas-a-panama/>



Pensioners and the elderly are another group that has been badly affected. As a result of Venezuela's national crisis and the policies of the Maduro government, they have received no income whatsoever from the state for over a year. The deplorable circumstances that they are living in have triggered numerous public protests both at home and abroad, as well as a series of initiatives to try and resolve the situation, involving the host countries' governments, political parties and civil society organizations. In Spain, for instance, an extremely active Venezuelan pensioners' association in the Community of Madrid recently succeeded in getting the Spanish People's Party and the People's Party and Citizens groups on the municipal council to approve a financial support programme to help them out.

Positive impacts outweighed by negative ones

There is no doubt that this mass emigration from Venezuela is resulting in a huge loss of human capital, particularly professionals and skilled labour. This in turn is causing a decline in the size of the working population. In 2015, The Economist reported that our country ranks second in the world after Serbia in the "brain drain" league table.

There are countless negative impacts on Venezuela's political, economic and socio-cultural development and also on its families, many of which have been torn apart. The negative repercussions also extend to the host countries, where the influx of immigrants is leading to changes in policies on e.g. migration, security and healthcare, as well as a rise in nationalist, anti-immigrant sentiment. If the dictatorship in Venezuela continues to be consolidated and the economy continues to stagnate, there is a danger that an uncontrollable wave of migration will ensue. The United Nations already warned of this possibility back in 2016.

Nevertheless, some positive effects are also associated with Venezuelan migration, such as increased knowledge, investment, learning and socio-cultural integration. Many large Venezuelan companies have been forced to move into neighbouring countries in order to survive, and the Venezuelan diaspora have also started numerous small businesses. All of this generates jobs and new products that benefit these other countries. We can only hope that one day these people will return to Venezuela.



Hundreds of people take part in an opposition demo against the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, in Caracas on February 12, 2014. AFP PHOTO / JUAN BARRETO

“We live in an age of migration. That is something we aren’t going to change. However, what we can do is meet our responsibility to treat migrants with dignity and explore ways of combatting the darker side of migration.”



This publication is the property of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the Liberal Network for Latin America (RELIAL). The copyright to this work is owned by the authors and/or the respective original sources. The copying (using any media), reproduction or adaptation of this document is prohibited.

The information and views set out in "A Liberal View" are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom or of Liberal Network for Latin America (RELIAL).

Produced and edited by:

Birgit Lamm, Regional Director Latin
America, FNF - RELIAL

Silvia Mercado, Project Coordinator FNF - RELIAL

Adriana Corona, Project Assistant FNF - RELIAL

Graphic design :

Carlos Durand | www.carlosdurand.net

Fundación Friedrich Naumann para la Libertad
Red Liberal de América Latina RELIAL

Cerrada de la Cerca N° 82. Col. San Ángel Inn
01060 - México D.F.
Tel. (+5255) 5550 1039

<http://www.relial.org> <http://www.la.fnst.org>

 /relial.red

 @RELIALred