

Migration as a Problem

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Abstract

Historically, migration has played a significant role in human evolution. However, these movements have not always produced positive outcomes; often, migration has been the result of natural disasters, economic crises, the rise of totalitarian regimes, or wars, with almost irreversible negative effects on entire populations. This article aims to review, using the Venezuelan case as an example, the dynamics of mass migration, its causes, stages, categories, and consequences—such as financial remittances and, briefly, deportations. To achieve this objective, secondary sources were used, allowing for an interpretative analysis of the phenomenon under study, and comparing these findings with concepts from institutional sources such as the International Organization for Migration. From this, it was concluded that there are multiple categories of mass migration, which together represent a serious problem that must be addressed through coordinated efforts between the governments of affected countries as part of global governance.

Keywords: Migration; Mass migration; Citizenship; Causes of migration; Categories; Global issue

Introduction

Undoubtedly, the progress of humanity has largely been driven by migration, in a relentless search for resources for survival and advancement. This journey represents hope—shifting from a state of hardship to one of prosperity and benefit, or, in other words, replacing a less satisfactory condition with a better one [1]. The very development of life, from its most basic forms to more complex states, is a type of migration. However, not all beings involved in this process survive; many perish along the way. From this paradox of survival and death come many examples of the positive and negative effects that movement has had on receiving communities. This paints a picture of things left behind and new things created or discovered along the way. A glance at the past reveals that the world has experienced human flows long before those recorded in the Bible—before Moses and his people set out for the Promised Land—and this movement has never ceased, continuing to this day. From Africa to the valleys of Mesopotamia, from Algiers across the Mediterranean, from Cádiz to Hispaniola or San Salvador, from Ukraine to the rest of Europe, or from Venezuela to the windswept plains—wherever they may be—these represent the origins and destinations of waves of people desperate

to find less hostile places to settle. Nowadays, exoduses are a global issue. Forced migrations affect individuals and entire families both economically and socially, producing various categories that should be addressed differently according to their causes and stages.

In this context, those experiencing the lack of a suitable environment for life are defined in [2], with reference to refugees, as “people who cannot return to their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of persecution, conflict, violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and therefore require international protection”—or, in other words, due to economic crises, political persecution, violence, and insecurity. A case in point is the current Venezuelan migration crisis, triggered by a totalitarian regime that has destroyed the citizenship status of its people. Countless anomalies and imbalances arise during this phenomenon, such as remittances sent by migrants to their families, which serve as a precarious relief for the crises in their home countries and cannot be considered a sustainable source of well-being or prosperity. This article examines the reasons why groups choose to leave their permanent homes for unknown lands, perceived as better places to build their lives. Although migration is often divided into internal and external, this article focuses solely

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on the movement of people across national borders, since the anomalies and imbalances described above are particularly present in this context. The analysis uses documentary research from a hermeneutic perspective. Topics such as citizenship and migration are discussed, different migration categories and stages are described, and both positive and negative aspects are highlighted, including the issue of remittances as a precarious relief for crises in origin countries. The Venezuelan diaspora is briefly referenced, introducing a different perspective on forced mass movements and proposing the rule of law as a key solution. Finally, the article discusses its limitations, points to possible future research, and presents its conclusions.

Materials and Methods

This is a study based on documentary sources, with information from institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, UN, UNHCR, etc. The information was collected, organized, and structured to facilitate analysis, discussion, and conclusions. The methodology included a literature review, note-taking, and triangulation of critical information.

Citizenship and migration

Nowadays, any discussion of migration must consider the concept of citizenship, especially in the so-called “Western society.” This requires reference to two basic concepts: identity and citizenship. While identity is the set of attributes and characteristics that make each unique, citizenship is the expression of belonging to a political community—the materialization of a fundamental collective identity [3]. The term “citizen” is closely linked to society and civilization. The supreme principle of equality before the law and the rule of law—which assigns duties and grants privileges and benefits—forms the theoretical context for recognizing someone as a citizen. According to [4], “the most distinctive feature of the modern concept of citizenship is its degree of integration into a specific and well-differentiated institutional framework,” which arises within the political realm of society. From this political interaction arise obligations such as defending the homeland, paying taxes, or participating in public affairs—activities that qualify someone as a citizen. On the other hand, there is a long list of rights, from the right to life, freedom, and inviolability of the home to economic and political rights, as well as identification documents, birth certificates, ID cards, and passports. These benefits are intended to provide social and economic stability within a specific society [5-8]. However, this is not always the case. Often, individuals find themselves burdened with duties and deprived of rights, to the point of being forced to leave the place of their citizenship—in other words, to migrate. This can occur

individually or on a mass scale, depending on the perceived threat or the opportunities found elsewhere.

Individual and mass migration

Migration has been caused by various factors, which determine both its duration and destination, raising the question of whether migrants will ever return home. Initially, the main motivation was the search for vital resources like water and food; later, it included land and precious metals, whose possession conferred power. Over time, religious, racial, political, and ideological reasons have also driven migration, resulting in ongoing displacement as a product of instability and social crisis. People are forced to move by hunger, precarious living conditions caused by natural disasters or economic crises, or the actions of repressive states imposing ideology, corruption, or alien creeds, or by armed conflict. Persecution often seeks to strip people of their rights and citizenship even within their own homeland, and sometimes even beyond its borders, undermining their customs, traditions, and social identity. This can lead to family separations, erasure of history and expectations, denial of documents and professional opportunities, and even the loss of names and nationality, forcing abrupt and violent restarts to life with few options. The problem escalates when migration is massive—usually forced, unplanned, and often over land or water, with entire families involved. Violence often begins as soon as people are forced out of their homes and neighborhoods. To make matters worse, the “promised land” is not always welcoming and brings its own difficulties, such as competition for resources, xenophobia, discrimination, and violence. The causes of migration can even replicate in the societies where migrants seek refuge. A lingering question is why, in hostile environments, some people choose to leave while others stay. The risks are significant for both decisions.

Categories of migration

Migration can be highly beneficial for those who choose it voluntarily, but for those forced to leave, it is a major personal, economic, institutional, logistical, and cultural problem that governments and societies must address to minimize crises, inequality, and violence. It is therefore necessary to identify different categories or types of human mobility, as noted in [9]. Not all migration decisions have the same causes, purposes, or consequences. There are key differences between political asylum seekers, displaced persons, and immigrants—whether individual or mass—who are all, in a sense, refugees. According to [9], citing Kosinski and Prothero, migration can be classified by time, distance, border limits, area units, type of decision (voluntary, impelled, forced), number (individual, mass), social organization of migrants, political situation, and economic or non-economic causes. Although all migrants leave their country for some reason,



seeking opportunities and new lives abroad and assuming the risks, their cases must be addressed through targeted international action. Someone who migrates alone may plan their move; someone fleeing political reasons may leave suddenly and without preparation. Mass movements are rarely planned and usually triggered by intense, uncontrollable pressures. Thus, the nature and consequences of migration vary, requiring tailored solutions. These differences must be defined and addressed to better understand and manage the phenomenon. A clear example is the means of transportation. Leaving one's country legally by plane is very different from walking thousands of kilometers, as Venezuelans do when cross the Darien Gap—a journey fraught with extortion, death, and jungle dangers, just to reach the US-Mexico border. Or crossing the Andes on foot, exposed to risks and violence. These scenarios highlight the difference between legal citizens and “illegal migrants.”

Stages of Migration

The exodus unfolds in several stages, beginning with harassment of citizens in their homes, prompting journeys down unknown, dangerous paths in search of economic and social stability that may never come. Arrival in host countries brings similar challenges: rejection, poverty, anxiety, and struggles for subsistence, precarious shelters, unemployment, uprooting, unfamiliar customs and languages, and dependence on local power brokers. After a year to two decades, according to testimonies from Venezuelan migrants in the US and Europe, the process of integration begins. Settling in—often with a precarious legal status, sometimes only a tax code for paying taxes, a driver's license, or a health permit—migrants try to stabilize their lives, adapting to new realities, neighbors, customs, languages, and even new jobs or professions. The need to support their families forces them into unstable, low-paying work. The final stage should be acceptance, with the second generation fully integrated, but this is not always achieved.

Positive and negative aspects of migration

People remain where they can meet their basic needs and enjoy prosperity and peace. If this isn't possible, they look elsewhere, aware that both origin and destination have dangers and difficulties. History is full of decisive human movements, which, like all human endeavors, have both positive and negative aspects. Migration has driven human progress, but at a high cost. Many mass migrations have occurred in wartime or during conquests—the Roman, Spanish, British, and American empires, for example, contributed much to their eras and left an undeniable legacy, but also brought crises, destruction, and death. Unlike invading armies, mass migrations seek refuge, not conquest.

There are many notable migrants: Leonardo da Vinci, Baruch Spinoza, Georg Friedrich Händel, Albert Einstein, Wernher von Braun, Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Rudolf Nureyev, and Pablo Picasso, among others, who left their homelands mainly for political, ideological, or religious reasons. Their journeys were perilous, yet sometimes rewarding. On the other hand, countless anonymous migrants experience hardship and uncertainty, with no record of success or failure, but undoubtedly face a turbulent journey.

Remittances: solution or problem

Remittances are the financial manifestation of migration, providing essential income to migrants' families in their home countries. Unlike salaries from foreign companies, remittances help alleviate persistent problems that triggered migration in the first place. While remittances provide immediate relief, they also reflect ongoing economic crises at home. When remittances account for a large share of a country's GDP—as in Honduras (25.9%), El Salvador (23.5%), Nicaragua (27.6%), Haiti (18.2%), Jamaica (16.8%) [10]—it shows that these macroeconomic imbalances are structural and not easily solved. For poor countries, remittances are not a sustainable solution, especially since migrants often earn them through low-productivity, low-paying jobs, and most of the money is spent, not invested. From the recipient country's perspective, remittance inflows are usually measured by central banks. However, restrictive currency controls sometimes make it hard to calculate remittances, as in Venezuela. Since 2021, some exchange houses and financial institutions have been allowed to receive and deliver funds from abroad, but any transfers still occur informally, using local bank accounts without any currency exchange taking place.

Deportations: the ultimate uncertainty

Deportations amplify the migrant's problems, marking them as candidates for expulsion from the “promised land.” History is full of mass deportations, often as solutions to social problems. In some cases, origin countries even refuse to accept their own deported nationals [11].

The Venezuelan Case

Venezuela's complex experience fits the above context. Once a prosperous, democratic nation, it has become a devastated country marked by economic collapse, human rights violations, and persecution, forcing nearly eight million people into exile. Many have found refuge in the United States and elsewhere. However, new and changing policies have led to Venezuelans being targeted even abroad, often equated with criminals, despite their status as citizens. Venezuelans thus face the cruel dilemma of being persecuted at home and discriminated against abroad, eligible for

deportation—mistreated by both their own country and their supposed protectors. Therefore, it cannot be said that migration is always positive, as claimed in [12]. International organizations and government policies must recognize that migration often creates instability and rootlessness, not only in countries of origin but also in transit and destination communities. For these reasons, the crises humanity faces cannot be solved by focusing on only one aspect of migration; the problem must be viewed holistically, with public policies that respect and protect citizens and their families until they can rebuild their lives. This requires global migration governance. This also involves strengthening societies within each country's borders, upholding the rule of law to ensure quality of life and protect individuals from the ideological, religious, or political whims of leaders who distort power for personal gain.

Limitations and Future Research

Although international migration has long been studied, it remains a complex field, involving many factors and considerations—the main limitation researchers face. This includes gathering, comparing, validating, and organizing information to conclude. Future research should further explore the relationship between remittances and economic growth in migrants' home countries. Another important area for study is deportation, the reverse of migration, with all its humanitarian, sociocultural, economic, and security dimensions.

Conclusions

Human mobility is a response to the need for new opportunities to improve people's quality and standard of living, and can be triggered by various reasons. Like many things, migration has both positive and negative aspects. Addressing migration requires consideration of citizenship and social identity. Migrations can be individual or collective; therefore, it is essential to distinguish between legal, coordinated mass movements and uncontrolled, illegal ones, which lead to inequality, misery, violence, and uprooting. This latter type has at least four distinct stages, all linked by the search for better opportunities. One result of this journey is remittances, which primarily reflect the economic crises in the countries that receive them. International organizations cannot claim that migration is always positive without considering the crises that drive it and the dangers migrants face. The Venezuelan case dramatically illustrates the hardships endured for over a decade. Given the seriousness of the phenomenon, necessary measures must be taken to mitigate it, and international law cannot be invoked under the guise of "sovereignty" or "self-determination" to maintain a global order that, by omission, allows dictators to commit atrocities and drive citizens into exile. Migration will always exist, as people continually seek better lives.

However, a rule of law that offers citizens opportunities for development within a democratic, efficient, and capitalist system one that equitably distributes resources could reduce the devastating effects of mass human movement.

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