

VENEZUELA: WHAT COMES AFTER HUGO CHAVEZ?
AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

PETE MAVROKORDATOS*

STAN STASCINSKY**

ABSTRACT

Venezuela is probably the latest country that is expected to go through a serious transition. The reason of course is the recent death of Hugo Chavez. The purpose of the authors in this paper is to take a look at Venezuela before Chavez, during Chavez and then if possible try to make some projections for the economic direction of the country and its future. In our attempt to do that, we are going to present data for about 40 years and based on this data we are going to do our evaluation

KEY WORDS

Hugo Chavez, before and after, and the future.

* TARRANT COUNTY COLLEGE, 828 HARWOOD RD, HURST, TX 76054

** TARRANT COUNTY COLLEGE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The discovery of Venezuela goes back about 500 years, around 1498 and 1550, which basically was the time between the third voyage of Columbus to America and his last trip to the West.

When Christopher Columbus got to Venezuela, the Caracas, the Arawak and the Camanagotos, who were the natives living in Venezuela at the time, covered themselves with trinkets that were made of gold and pearls, and of course the name of the newly discovered land was not Venezuela. The name Venezuela was given to it by a Spanish conqueror by the name Alonso de Ojeda who called it Little Venice, due to the similarities between the natives' houses that were on stilts in a lake, and those in Venice, Italy.

Venezuela went through a lot of changes during the first years of its history, but a major change took place during 1795. At that time there was a revolution against Spanish control, but was not very successful. A successful revolution took place around 1810, after Napoleon took control of Spain. The leader of this revolution was Francisco de Miranda, and by 1811 a complete independence was declared in Venezuela. A few years later, Venezuela with a number of other territories joined the Federal Republic of Colombia, but a few years later, around 1830, Venezuela along with New Granada came out, and that was the collapse of the Gran Colombia. Since then, up until 1959 the country was run by military people, who for the most part promoted the oil industry and encouraged some social reforms.

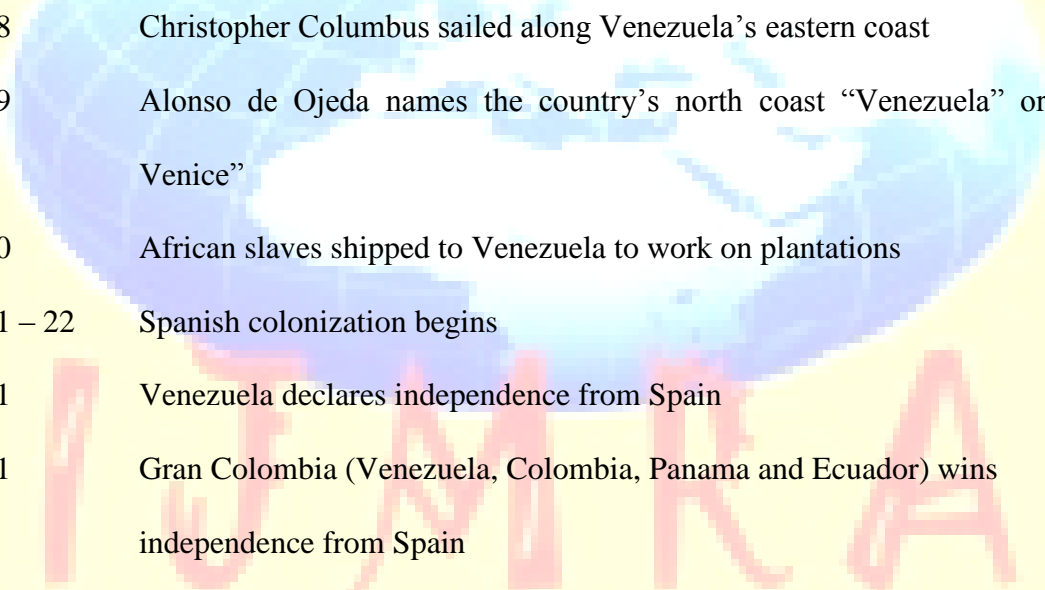
After 1959 the country was run by democratic governments, until 1999 when Hugo Chavez became president until 2013, the year of his death. Chavez graduated from the Venezuelan Academy of Military Sciences, and became the president of Venezuela in 1999. His presidency had its ups and downs, and the worst was the straining relations with the United States because he was selling oil to Cuba, and he did nothing to stop drug trafficking in Colombia. Chavez during

his presidency created a lot of controversies, but the worst one was when he tried to put the oil industry under complete government control, and this pushed the military to remove him from power temporarily during 2002.

For this removal, Chavez was blaming the U.S. but he came back and run Venezuela until his death in 2013.

As mentioned above Venezuela has a history of about 500 years as it is known today, so below the authors will include a timeline highlighting some of the most important events of Venezuela's history:

Timeline

- 
- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1498 | Christopher Columbus sailed along Venezuela's eastern coast |
| 1499 | Alonso de Ojeda names the country's north coast "Venezuela" or "Little Venice" |
| 1550 | African slaves shipped to Venezuela to work on plantations |
| 1521 – 22 | Spanish colonization begins |
| 1811 | Venezuela declares independence from Spain |
| 1821 | Gran Colombia (Venezuela, Colombia, Panama and Ecuador) wins independence from Spain |
| 1830 | Venezuela separates from Gran Colombia and Caracas becomes the Capital |
| 1908 – 35 | Venezuela becomes one of the world's largest oil exporters |
| 1947 | Venezuela's first democratically elected leader, Romulo Gallegos overthrown by the military |
| 1964 | Raul Leoni becomes president |

- 1983 Major government spending cuts due to world oil prices falling
- 1989 Loans from the IMF are requested by president Carlos Andres Perez
- 1992 Failed coup by Hugo Chavez, who is also jailed
- 1994 Chavez out of jail and forms a political party
- 1998 Hugo Chavez elected president
- 1999 Chavez promises to reduce poverty and corruption
- 2004 Voters defeat an effort to recall Chavez
- 2006 Chavez wins re – election for a new 6 year term
- 2007 Chavez takes control over four heavy oil products in the Orinoco belt
- 2010 The opposition to Chavez gains a lot of power, but still Chavez’s party remains a majority and in power.
- 2011 Chavez undergoes cancer surgery in Cuba
- 2012 Chavez re – elected regardless his illness
- 2013 Chavez dies of cancer
- 2014 Presidential elections see Chavez’s chosen successor, Nicolas Maduro elected

Again this is not a complete timeline of Venezuela’s history, but only some of the most important events.

CURRENT LITERATURE

In this section the authors will present and discuss a lot of data, (for about 40 years) for Venezuela, and that will basically give us a good idea about the economy over the years. The authors will present the most recent economic data in order to evaluate the current economic

situation. The majority of this section though will concentrate on a few years before Hugo Chavez, and a number of years during Hugo Chavez's rule.

It is not a big secret that the relations between Venezuela and the United States are not the best. In fact Hugo Chavez was very outspoken and let his feelings about the U.S. known in several occasions during his presidency. The reason that these relations did not get any worse, is oil. The need of U.S. of Venezuelan oil and the need of Venezuela for the American dollar. In fact, during 2010 oil exports to the U.S. were \$26 billions.

These relations are expected to gradually improve now that Chavez is gone and the people of Venezuela realize that they have a lot to benefit from the U.S.

As was mentioned above, Venezuela has an abundance of oil, and this contributed to a strong economy during the later years of the 20th century. This growth encouraged the government to initiate a lot of social programs and food subsidies. This though could not go on for ever, and during the late 198's, as a result of the worldwide oil prices drop, the government had to implement several liberal economic policies in order to fight the price drops. These policies were not successful the prices continued to rise in relation to Venezuela's per capita income.

As a result of this economic turmoil, we see the rise of socialism and Hugo Chavez in the late 1990's. When Hugo Chavez took over, he increased social spending, but the Venezuelan economy continued to suffer due to high levels of corruption and shortages of necessities.

The two figures that follow on the next two pages are summarizing the situation in Venezuela for both years before and during Hugo Chavez's rule. Figure 1 presents more than just economic information. The first data shows children enrolled in education, and as can be seen there is a steady improvement since 1999, which was the year that Chavez took over. The second set of data shows households below the poverty line, and really this is the only one that is worse since

1999. Another one that showed improvement is the life expectancy. In 1999 life expectancy was around 72 and by 2005 it jumped to almost 74. The last set of data shows the GDP per capita. This one actually declined for a few years after 1999, but as the next figure shows, it more than doubled by 2011. Figure 2 shows several key economic indicators for Venezuela. The date here starts at 1999, the year that Chavez took over, and goes all the way to 2011 and 2012. As can be seen some of them showed drastic improvement.

FIGURE 1

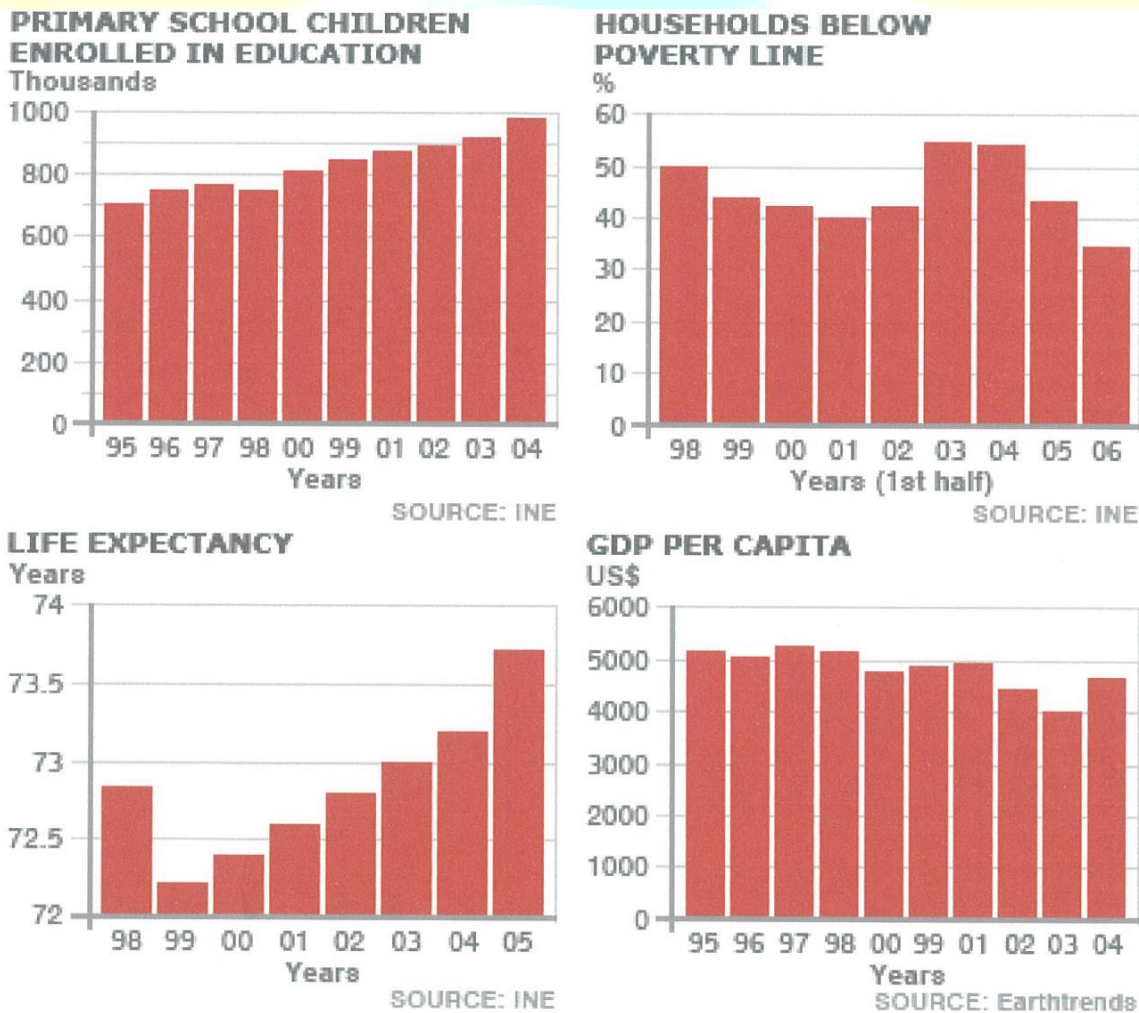
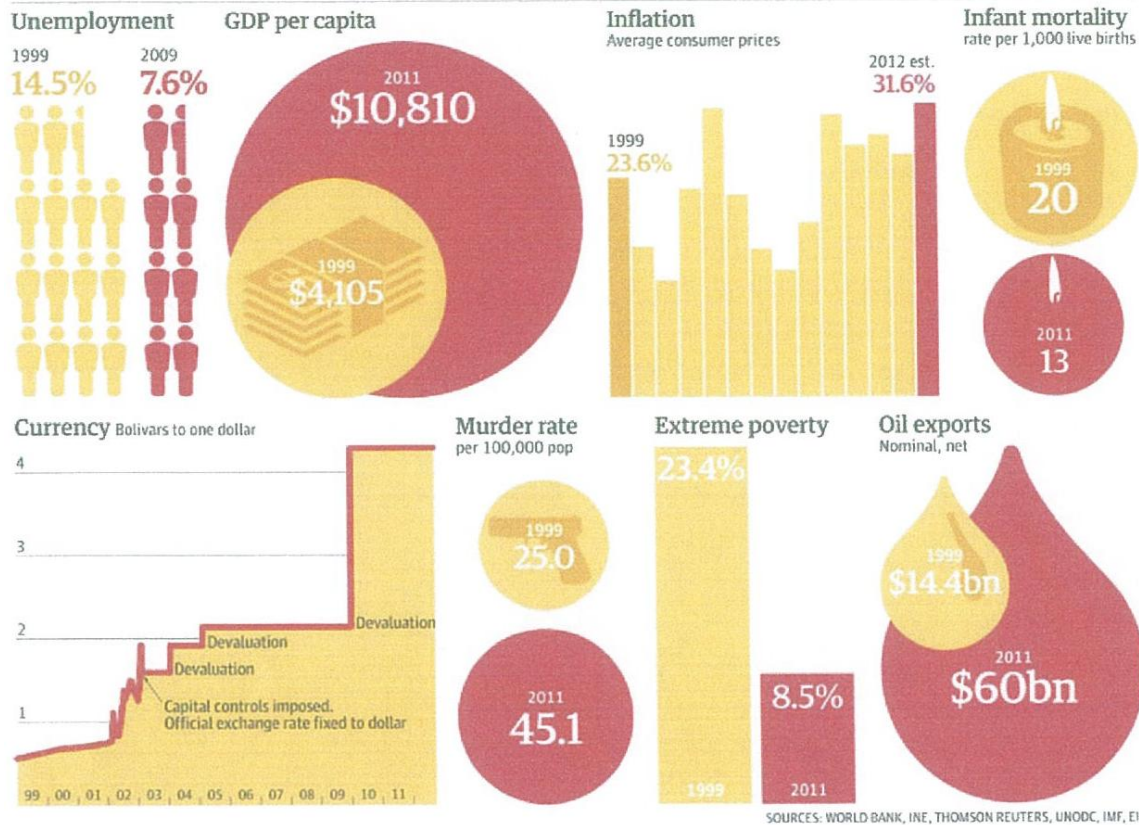


FIGURE 2

Venezuela Key indicators



STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

In this section the authors will present the economic situation in Venezuela in numbers. For that purpose the table that follows on the next page includes a number of economic indicators, such as the Gross Domestic Product, Venezuela’s population, the Growth Rate, Venezuela’s trade, both exports and imports, and unemployment, and all this data will be shown for about 40 years. The data will also be shown in graphs for comparison and evaluation purposes.

TABLE 1

VENEZUELA DATA 1970 – 2012

	GDP 2005	POP.		M 2005	X 2005	Xn 2005	UNEMP.
	U.S. B \$	MILLION	GR. R. %	U.S. B \$	U.S. B \$	U.S. B \$	%
1970	73.71	10.7	7.71				
1971	74.8	11.1	1.48				
1972	75.76	11.5	1.28				
1973	81.15	11.9	7.11				
1974	82.83	12.3	2.07	6.1	64.9	58.8	
1975	85.23	12.7	2.9	7.9	51.9	44	
1976	91.81	13.2	7.73	10.6	51.4	40.8	
1977	97.57	13.7	6.27	13.6	48.2	34.6	
1978	99.86	14.2	2.35	13.3	45.8	32.5	
1979	100.63	14.6	0.76	10.2	49.5	39.3	
1980	96.18	15.9	-4.4	10	41.4	31.4	5.9
1981	95.83	15.5	-0.4	11.3	39	27.7	7
1982	93.84	15.9	-2.1	13.1	35.4	22.3	8.1
1983	90.31	16.4	-3.8	6.2	34.3	28.1	11.5
1984	91.61	16.9	1.44	9.5	39.8	30.3	12.9
1985	91.79	17.3	0.19	9.2	38.1	28.9	13.2
1986	97.77	17.8	6.51	9.1	42.8	33.7	10.9
1987	101.27	18.3	3.58	9.9	42.3	32.4	9.1
1988	107.16	18.8	5.82	11.4	43.9	32.5	7.3
1989	97.98	19.3	-8.6	8	46.5	38.5	9.7
1990	104.32	19.7	6.47	7.6	53.1	45.5	10.3
1991	114.47	20.2	9.73	11.4	55.4	44	9.5
1992	131.4	20.7	6.06	14.3	54.2	39.9	7.7
1993	121.74	21.2	0.28	13.4	60.8	47.4	6.7
1994	118.88	21.6	-2.3	10.9	65.7	54.8	8.6
1995	123.57	22.1	3.95	13.5	69.8	56.3	10.2
1996	123.33	22.6	-0.2	12	75.2	63.2	12.4
1997	131.19	23	6.37	18.3	60.4	42.1	10.6
1998	131.57	23.5	0.29	20.3	62.6	42.3	11
BEGINNING OF THE CHAVEZ YEARS							
1999	123.72	23.9	-6	18.4	55.7	37.3	14.5
2000	128.28	24.4	3.69	20.7	58.9	38.2	13.2
2001	132.63	24.9	3.39	23.6	56.8	33.2	12.8
2002	120.89	25.3	-8.9	17.7	54.6	36.9	16.2
2003	111.51	25.8	-7.8	13.9	48.9	35	16.8
2004	131.9	26.3	18.3	32	55.6	23.6	15
2005	145.51	26.7	10.3	29.8	57.7	27.9	11.4
2006	159.88	27.2	9.87	40.1	55.9	15.8	9.3
2007	173.87	27.7	8.75	53.4	51.7	-1.7	7.5
2008	183.05	28.1	5.28	54.1	51.2	-2.9	6.9
2009	177.19	28.6	-3.2	43.5	44.2	0.7	7.8
2010	174.55	29	-1.5	42.3	38.5	-3.8	8.6
2011	181.84	29.5	4.18	48.8	40.3	-8.5	8.3
2012	192.07	29.9	5.63	60.7	40.9	-19.8	8.1
END OF CHAVEZ YEARS							
SOURCE: The World Databank, http://databank.worldbank.org							

The figure that follows, Figure 3, shows Venezuela's GDP and its population, between 1970 and 2012. What can be seen here is that even though population had a steady growth during these years, the GDP has grown a much faster rate, which means that the population did not have an impact on the GDP.

FIGURE 3

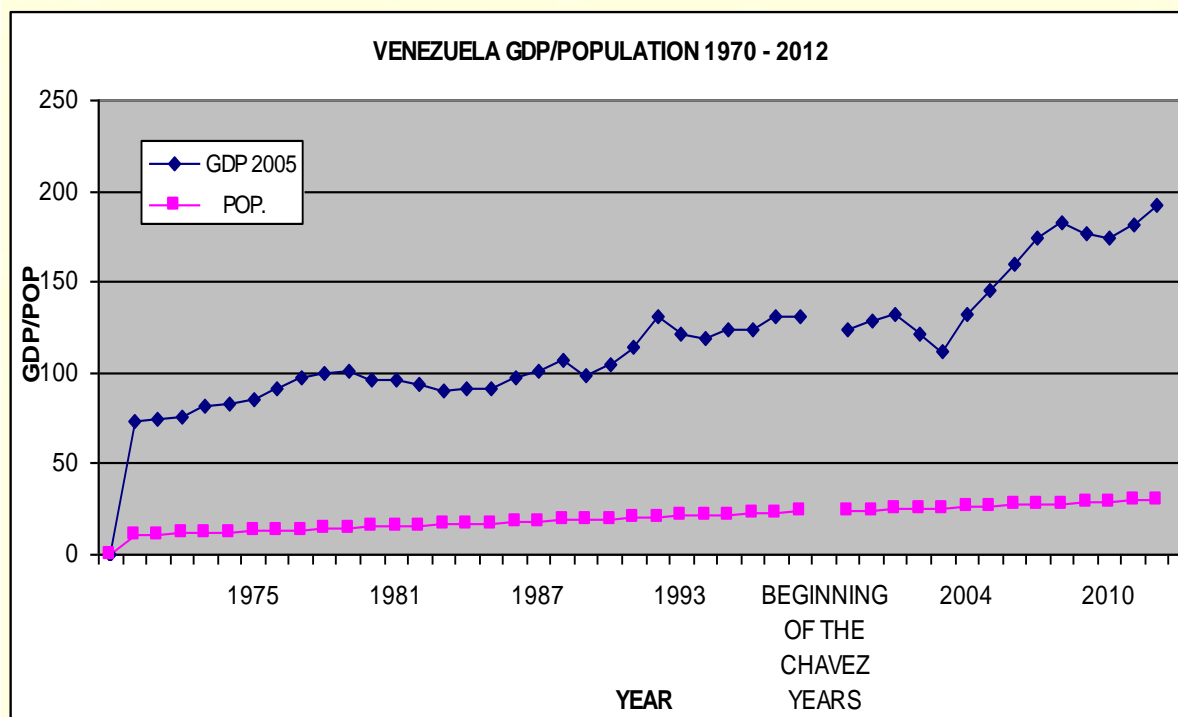


Figure 4, on the next page, shows Venezuela's population and growth rate for the years 1970 – 2012. This graph shows a steady growth of population, but the growth rate does not seem to respond to that, even though there was a big jump after Chavez took over, around 2004, but it did not last very long.

Figure 5, also on the next page, shows Venezuela's exports (X), imports (M), and net exports (Xn). It can be seen that Venezuela had positive Xn for years, obviously because of oil exports, but the net exports have been declining after Chavez took over, and finally they became negative during the last six or seven years. Our research has not found any economic reasons to explain

this turn around of exports. The only possible thing that can explain this is that countries started boycotting Venezuela's oil due to Chavez.

FIGURE 4

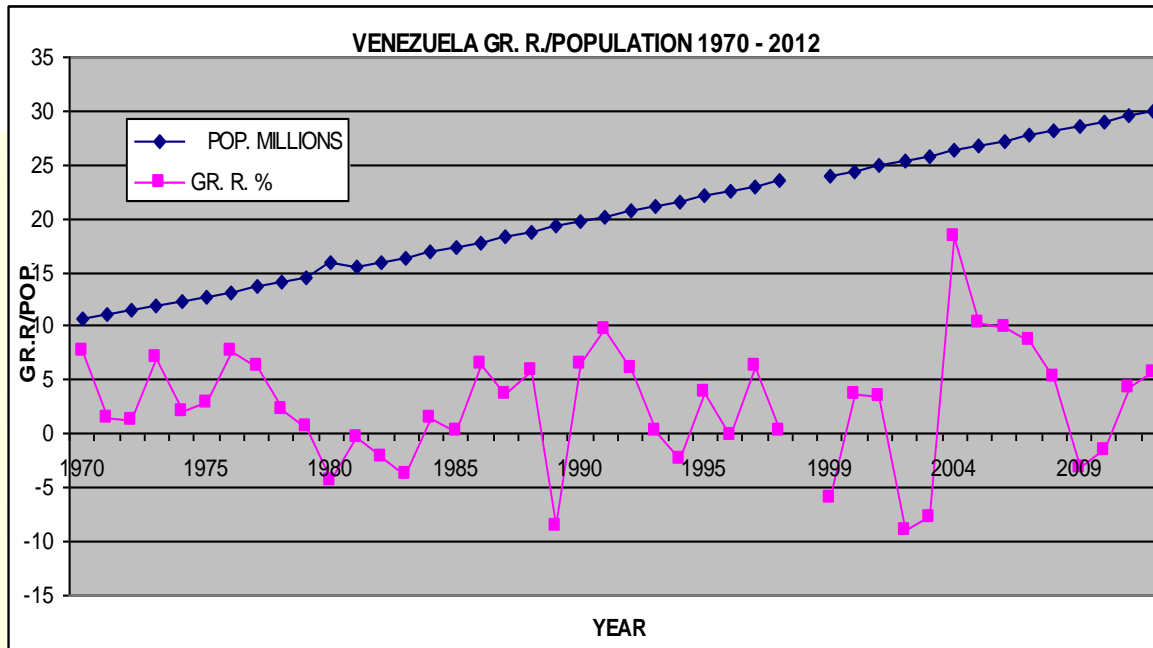
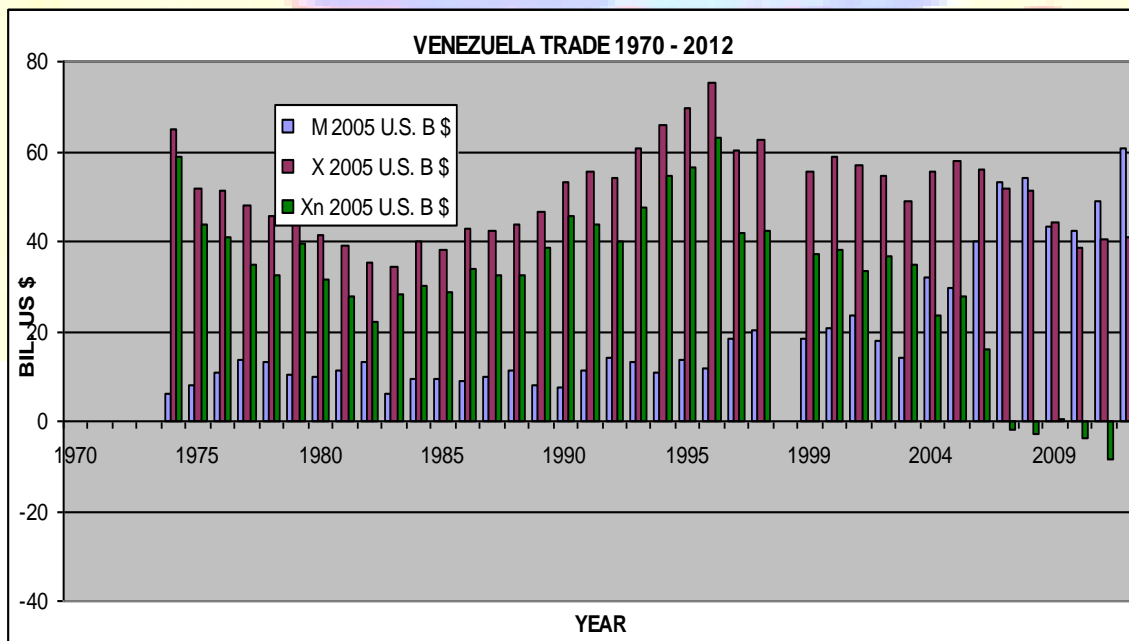


FIGURE 5



CONCLUSION

In this last section, the authors will try to derive some conclusions from the data presented. Our research basically did not find a negative impact on the economy after Chavez took over in 1999. In fact Figures 1 and 2 for the most part are showing improvement in most of the areas presented. Out of all the data presented only 2 are worse after than before. The people under the poverty line and inflation which reached 31.6% by 2012, but it was rising for a number of years earlier.

Chavez died in 2013, and the world as a whole expected and still expects that things will change in Venezuela both politically and economically. To this date though nothing has drastically changed, the success of the new president, Nicolas Maduro, who was Chavez's choice, is questionable and everybody is waiting to see which direction he will take Venezuela. In conclusion the authors would like to say that this is not a complete paper, but only the beginning of a topic that could last for years. To that end, any suggestions or recommendations that can improve and take this paper a step further will be appreciated.

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