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Movementism and Party Institutionalization in Venezuela

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MOVEMENTISM AND PARTY INSTITUTIONALIZATION

IN VENEZUELA

By

Miguel Dávila

Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

For the designation of Department Honors

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ABSTRACT

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The charismatic authority of Hugo Chávez often led analysts to affirm that the Bolivarian Revolution was dependent on his leadership. This study attempts to assess the degree of that dependence by examining whether the Bolivarian Revolution has institutionalized or not. Three variables were examined: the discourse of President Chávez, the political unity of PSUV deputies in the National Assembly, and the bypass of the electoral framework by Chávez. Two hypotheses were then formulated. The first one stipulated that the aspects of movementism found in the Bolivarian Revolution were relevant enough to disqualify it as an institutionalized system. The second one stipulated that the Bolivarian Revolution had, however, made efforts to institutionalize that qualify it as a system in transition. The revolution was found to be only partially institutionalized as the bypass of the electoral framework by President Chávez was both a violation of institutionalized democracy and participatory democracy. A discussion of findings follow.

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INTRODUCTION

“Today April 19, 203 years later, we have a fatherland,”¹ these were the words of Vicepresident Arreaza the day Nicolás Maduro, the hand-picked successor of President Chávez was sworn in office after winning a hotly contested election. The date is also significant because 203 years ago, on April 19, Venezuela began its path towards independence from the Spanish crown. Venezuela was the first country in Ibero-America to officially begin the independence movement with the destitution of the Spanish governor in Caracas and the creation of an independent government council. “Fifteen years ago, we were a neocolony. Thank you, *comandante!* We won’t disappoint you!” proclaimed Vicepresident Arreaza, attributing a new form of independence to President Chávez and his administration. Indeed, Venezuelan politics had a very different dynamic just fifteen years ago when the system that had prevailed since 1958 collapsed. This new independence could be related to the dismissal of the neoliberal policies that were implemented in Latin America for three decades (Murray, Cameron, and Hershberg 1), or it could also be related to one of the main premises of the Bolivarian Revolution: *empoderamiento*, or empowerment (Levine 178). These practices of empowerment have had a significant effect in Venezuelan politics, having the successes of the Bolivarian Revolution be dependent on the mobilization of popular sectors and their organization (McCarthy 123).

Similarly to the independence movement in 1810, Venezuela was once again the pioneer of this newer form of independence that sought to empower those who have been marginalized by rejecting the neoliberal policies dictated by the Washington Consensus.² The election of

¹ “Vicepresidente Arreaza: Hoy 19 de abril, 203 años después, tenemos patria.” VTV www.vtv.gob.ve

President Chávez in 1998 revived the left in Latin America. Subsequent to his election, a trend towards the left began to form, first with the election of Lagos in Chile in 2000, then with the election of Lula da Silva in Brazil. And with the elections of Kirchner and Vasquez in Argentina and Uruguay respectively, the trend got accentuated. By the end of the decade, the left had conquered important political spaces in almost every country in Latin America (Murray, Cameron, and Hershberg 2). Although these left turns in Latin America, now called “the pink tide,” have had similar backgrounds and goals, they have nonetheless been unique to every country. Yet the one thing they have in common besides anti-neoliberalism and empowerment is the figure of Chávez and his Bolivarian Revolution as the pioneer. His policies have been followed by many governments in Latin America, especially in Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Ecuador, governments that represent a more radical left turn (Castañeda and Morales 10). Considering these premises, it is then easy to understand why the streets of Caracas were filled with thousands of people mourning their leader after his death on March 5, 2013. Chávez was a popular but controversial figure both in Venezuela and elsewhere. For more than fifteen years, winning almost every single election in the country, Chávez led both his country and the revolutionary left in Latin America. However, considering the cult of personality that was denounced by the opposition in Venezuela and in other countries, the media often played with the possibility of the extinction of chavismo once Chávez was gone. While this was not the case in the most recent presidential election of April 14, 2013, Chavismo without Chávez has been severely weakened. The candidate chosen by Hugo Chávez to succeed him was not able to

² Term refers to the neoliberal policies by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the US Treasury that sought to reinforce free market policies, strengthening the private sector, liberalization of trade, and reduction of government intervention (Smith, 14).

conquer as many votes as Chávez had in October 2012, and this loss almost resulted in the election of opposition candidate Henrique Capriles Radonski.

One of the reasons why Chavismo may have been weakened in such a short period of time may be due to movement politics, the topic that was studied thoroughly in this paper. One of the key characteristics of a political movement is the direct appeal of the masses from the leader, which increases the likelihood for parties to weaken and populism to rise as an alternative (Mainwaring and Scully 22). These direct appeals of the masses, sometimes in the form of plebiscitary governments, can be reflections of a system where the party is not valuable (McGuire 1), and this may result in political instability.

Definition of political movements and political parties

A key element in describing the stability of democracies is the nature of the political parties that form the system. These political parties can either be institutionalized or not, and in many cases, the reason why some political parties haven't been institutionalized is because they have remained political movements. While remaining a political movement can be very problematic for the stability of democracy, institutionalizing a political party is also a complex process that can take a long time. After all, one of the main premises to conclude whether a political party is institutionalized or not is that it must have stable roots in society (Mainwaring 1). However, there are more issues that go beyond attaining stable roots in society. A political movement, as it is described by McGuire, is "a set of people who share a common political identity and whose leaders aspire to full and permanent control of the state through the most readily available means, electoral or not" (McGuire 7). In this sense, a political movement can indeed establish a common political identity with society, an important indicator to predict whether any political organization will be successful at attaining and maintaining control of the

government. Yet being in control of government is not an indication of party institutionalization, it is rather an indication of party strength.

To discuss the differences between party institutionalization and party strength, it is important to introduce McGuire's definition of a political party. In his work titled "Peronism without Perón," he refers to a political party as "an organization whose leaders and members seek to control the state exclusively through elections involving competition with other parties (7)." It must be noted that McGuire excludes the sharing of a common political identity as an indicator of an institutionalized political party. This is precisely because the establishment of a common political identity between society and a political organization may describe the level of success and strength that an organization has in controlling the state, but it does not reflect its level of institutionalization. There are two key differences between a political party and a political movement. The first one is whether the political process is viewed as a competition with other actors, and the second one is whether the means used to seek control are purely electoral or not. Furthermore, a political movement does not put the party in the center of the political process. Instead, leaders become the center of the process (Mainwaring and Scully 3). An institutionalized political party is, by this definition, clearly more committed to democracy in the sense that it does not seek to abolish the principles of competition and plurality. It is also more democratic in the sense that it does not consider non electoral means to attain power. However, the same way that party strength should not be equated to institutionalization, political movementism should not be equated to a lack of democracy either (Mainwaring 21).

Why Institutionalize?

The type of political movement that I studied in this paper is that of a leader-centered movement. Political parties, in many regions of the world, can often begin to join the political

arena as small movements under the strong leadership of an individual. However, political parties are expected to evolve and institutionalize so that elections are organized around these parties and not individuals. This process, as Samuel Huntington argues, is necessary so that the political organizations that seek to control the state “acquire value and stability (Mainwaring and Scully 4).” Mainwaring argues that in countries where democracy is not consolidated, political parties do not shape and influence system. They are rather personalistic, dependent on the ambitions of a leader (Mainwaring 3). And while having an institutionalized political party does not immediately translate to having a more efficient democracy, an institutionalized political party is far better than a political movement, or an “inchoate party” because it makes politics more predictable and, therefore, stable. Avoiding an inchoate party system, where dominant parties are not institutionalized, Mainwaring proceeds, is also important because less institutionalization sets the arena for populists to ascend to power. As a consequence, a scenario where policies are pursued to seek publicity instead of long-term impacts is far more common (Mainwaring 22).

To summarize, the key issue with having a political party that is inchoate or not institutionalized is that it severely affects the political stability of a state. Democracy may also be affected, but that would essentially be due to instability. There may also be a high risk of dependency when a leader-centered movement is in power. Considering the relevance of defining the level of institutionalization in the sense that it enhances the stability and predictability of a democratic political system, the purpose of this study is to examine the process by which a leader-centered mass movement transforms or evolves into an institutionalized political party, a process called routinization (McGuire 16). Like McGuire and Mainwaring,

however, my study does not seek to determine whether a particular party is completely institutionalized or not. It merely seeks to place a party in the continuum of routinization.

The case of Venezuela: Institutionalization and *Puntofijismo*

Officially renamed “the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela” under the constitution of 1999, the Venezuelan case under the Hugo Chávez’s regime provides an excellent opportunity to study the process of routinization. However, in order to better evaluate routinization during the Bolivarian Revolution, it is important to discuss what democracy was like in Venezuela before 1999.

Prior to the presidency of Hugo Chávez, it had remained a stable, bipartisan democracy since 1958 (Smilde 3). Subsequent to the overthrow of the Marcos Pérez Jiménez dictatorship in 1958, three national political parties negotiated a pact in which they would commit to democracy and institutionalization. The three parties were Acción Democrática (AD), founded as a social democratic party, Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI), a social Christian party, and Union Republicana Democrática (URD), a less moderate leftist party. The pact of Punto Fijo signed by these three parties not only ensured that the three parties committed to electoral means to attain power, it also excluded several actors from the entire political system (Smilde 3). The Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV), for example, was excluded from the pact. A few years after the pact was signed, Union Republicana Democrática (URD) also decided to leave the pact, which strengthened both COPEI and AD to the extent in which some scholars have labeled the Punto Fijo system as a *partidocracia* or “partyocracy.” Actors from the traditional right were excluded, too, however. As landowners and powerful elites became associated with the dictatorship of Pérez Jiménez, the new system would ensure that their involvement in politics was limited. Among many other means³, some of which may even

include fraud, this *partidocracia* equally divided power between the two parties by making immediate reelection to public office impossible under the 1961 constitution.

While the Punto Fijo framework ensured stability, it also created an accountability problem that some scholars have labeled as one of the main reasons why the system eventually collapsed in 1999 (Crisp13). To describe the extent to which public officials in Venezuela were not accountable, it is important to discuss how relatively weak the legislative branch was. Important economic decisions were not voted in Congress. A small group of people who were unknown to the Venezuelan public made the decisions, and the president, as a result, courted the interests of the small group instead of appealing to the Venezuelan population. This small group was composed of three high-rank executive officials, one representative from private enterprises, and another one from organized labor (Crisp 2). Besides this group, oil multinationals also exerted some control over the country as they benefited more from the oil industry than Venezuelans did. Although national resources weren't necessarily equally distributed, the Punto Fijo system employed clientelism and populism in order to retain control of the nation. Power was distributed in accordance to the election results, but the party who lost was never disenfranchised. If AD won an election, the public services were distributed widely to Copeyanos too, and many of the governmental positions were retained by the losing party in order to continue the balance. (Smilde 3; Hillman 59). Although it was highly unaccountable, the system may have lasted several decades because it did have important accomplishments. Social and economic progress was made during the first half of the pact, and democracy was legitimized by high participation levels in elections (Cannon 35). The weaknesses of the Punto Fijo system were a lack of accountability, predominance of elite control, and, most importantly, the fact that parties became

³ The ability limitations to choose all local and national representatives, a strict party hierarchy, and the creation of clientelistic networks are some of the other means (Smilde 3).

so strong and institutionalized that, instead of shaping the system, they dominated it in its entirety. It is also important to mention that, as economic challenges began to threaten stability, AD and COPEI were not willing to change in accordance to the changes that the Venezuelan population was going through (Levine 171). Venezuelans, under diminishing economic conditions in the 1980s, began to make new demands that would address the weaknesses of the Punto Fijo system, but by the time the parties began to make some reforms, the system was already collapsing.

The case of Venezuela: Collapse of *Puntofijismo* and the Rise of Chávez

Once oil prices began to plummet, so did the incomes and living standards of most Venezuelans. The government then responded by making the executive stronger to resolve the crisis. In 1984, 160 out of the 180 laws approved by Congress were drafted by the President. The next year, President Lusinchi issued more than 70 decrees to rescue the economy by refinancing public debt and cutting public spending. Other decrees were issued to establish different rates for the national currency and accumulate foreign exchange. However, the increased power of the executive only served the purpose of reinforcing the model of import substitution industrialization that was already failing in Venezuela (Crisp 2). Due to the lack of improvements, a “civil society” emerged, and protests became common occurrences. In 1989, however, when President Carlos Andres Pérez implemented even harsher economic reforms that included a reduction of oil subsidies, the demands to “democratize democracy” intensified to the level where government and profound institutional change were needed (Garcia 34). In addition, citizens in Caracas took the streets and rioted in February 1989, events that took the lives of hundreds of people (Smilde 6). Three years after *El Caracazo*, the demands reached a higher level in the 1992 attempt to overthrow the Pérez government. Led by then Colonel Hugo Chávez,

MBR-200 (Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario-200) realized that the political turmoil the country was living was a good opportunity to implement some of the goals they had established when the movement was founded in 1983. The coup ultimately failed, but it served to launch Chávez's career as a national leader who "stirred popular hope that the struggle had only begun" (Hellinger 32). Subsequently, the popularity of Chávez and MBR-200 kept rising due to the Venezuelan government's refusal to implement the reforms that were needed to restore stability.

The government made efforts to decentralize, but the parties had already been severely weakened by MBR-200. Other parties outside the Punto Fijo system began to win important mayoral offices and governorships, but MBR-200 maintained a low profile since it was more concerned with fighting institutions than participating within them (Lopez Maya 78). MBR-200 was also viewed negatively by other leftist parties due to the rhetoric and leadership of Hugo Chávez, which could also explain why the movement was not visible for a few years (Sanchez Urribarri 176). In 1997, MBR-200 senior officials, Chávez being one of them, changed their mind about the democratic process, and announced that they would participate in the 1998 election. As a result, they formed the electoral party that would replace MBR-200, called MVR (Fifth Republic Movement), and registered Chávez as their candidate. The new organization remained loyal to the initial proposal of MBR-200 to radically change the Venezuelan political system by forming a new republic with a different set of values, but they also retained much of the organization and structure of a political movement (Lopez Maya 82). Chávez, as the only figure who represented real change from the status quo in 1998, won the national election with 56.20% of the national vote, more than 15 points ahead of the second best contender Henrique Salas Römer, and has won almost every single national election since then. Shortly after the 1998 election, the Chávez administration proposed a referendum to ask Venezuelans whether

they wanted to abolish the old system of government and have a new constitution. The proposal, although it had very low turnout, was approved by the people. A Constituent Assembly was formed to draft a new constitution and form a new republic. This abolished the branches of government in the old republic, and the another presidential election was held to give legitimacy to the process. Chávez won this election comfortably, and it is from this election that the number of presidential periods is counted.

Although he remained a very popular figure for most of his presidency, Chávez faced plenty of challenges coming from the opposition. A couple of years after a new constitution was drafted and approved by the people on the principles of participatory democracy, the opposition orchestrated a coup d'état that abolished the new constitution and attempted to return to Puntofijismo. Chávez was indeed removed from the executive for a couple of days, but returned after people in the barrios mobilized and surrounded the Miraflores palace demanding his return (Dominguez 121). That same year in 2002, the opposition attempted once again to remove Chávez from office. This time by paralyzing the entire economy through an oil strike that lasted a few months and may have cost the country over 700,000 jobs (Britto Garcia 151). The strategy was again defeated by the government, but the opposition had not given up. In 2004, they collected signatures to request the recall of President Chávez under article 74 of the 1999 constitution. As enough signatures were collected to request the removal, a new election was held. Yet Chávez was able to remain in office with more than 59% of the vote in his favor.⁴ Realizing that a major defeat in the legislative elections was very likely, the opposition decided to boycott the entire election process on the basis that the National Electoral Council was

⁴ National Electoral Council (CNE) www.cne.gob.ve

fraudulent (Dominguez 124). Evidently, this resulted in a National Assembly that was 100% Chavista.

After a series of consecutive defeats, the opposition began to change their strategy by participating in the new institutional framework. They unified in the 2006 presidential election and proposed Governor Manuel Rosales of Zulia as their single candidate. Chávez won the election with a 30-point margin, and Manuel Rosales recognized the results publicly and accepted the defeat. In 2007, the opposition begins to gain a series of important victories. First with the defeat of the 2007 constitutional reform that sought to transform Venezuela into a socialist state, then in 2008 by winning the governorships of the most important states including the Capital District of Caracas, and finally in the 2010 legislative election when the opposition broke the PSUV's absolute majority. In 2012, a new presidential election was held, and the opposition candidate Henrique Capriles Radonski was defeated by 10-point margin as President Chávez won his third reelection under the 1999 constitution.⁵

Two months after the election, on December 8, 2012, President Chávez announced on live television that he needed to return to Cuba to continue his medical treatment for the cancer that he had been diagnosed with in 2011. Although Venezuelans had gotten used to the constant trips Chávez was making due to his cancer, he had said he was cured months before, and actively participated in campaign rallies to disqualify the rumors that were coming from the opposition in regards to his deteriorated health. More surprising was the fact that he addressed the possibility of not being able to return to Venezuela in good condition. He also asked Venezuelans to vote for Nicolás Maduro, the vice-president, in the event that new elections needed to be called. On March 5, 2013, Chávez died in Caracas, an event that not only propelled thousands of

⁵ National Electoral Council (CNE) www.cne.gob.ve

Venezuelans to massively take the streets to mourn their leader, but it also activated a very particular constitutional process. Under the Venezuelan constitution, in the event that a president dies in office, the vice president must become the interim president until a new presidential election is performed, which must be within 30 days after the president's death (Art 263). Following this logic, Nicolás Maduro was sworn in as interim president, and shortly after, the National Electoral Council (CNE) announced that the new presidential elections would be on April 14, 2013. As it was expected by most analysts, the two major contenders were Henrique Capriles Radonski and Interim President Nicolás Maduro. At the time of writing, Venezuela seems to be immersed in a political crisis as the narrow win by the now proclaimed President Maduro is contested by the opposition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Venezuelan politics has been a controversial subject both in Venezuela and abroad for the last fifteen years or so. While many authors have now become interested in the Bolivarian Revolution, they don't reach any consensus on almost any of the levels of discussion. The wide range of opinions and studies make it possible to find both extremely favorable and unfavorable assessments. This is due to the fact that the level of polarization lived in Venezuela has transcended to the academic literature (Hawkins 26). Brewer-Carías, for example, finds that the Chávez administration has constantly defrauded the constitution by implementing a highly authoritarian system that centralizes and makes all the public powers subject to the executive (Brewer-Carías 2-5). Levine is a proponent of the idea of "new face, same dependencies," in which he denounces how Chávez has made the popular sectors be dependent upon him. He

argues that the Punto Fijo system has been replicated by Chávez (Levine 180). In regards to movementism, Sánchez-Urribarri finds that the entire Venezuelan left is subject to President Chávez and not the other way around, a risk for the stability of the state. Furthermore, he argues that Chávez's "movement" constantly refrains from sharing power (Sanchez-Urribarri 191). Hawkins also labels Chavismo as essentially a "populist movement" that is semi democratic and disregards pluralism (Hawkins 15). On the other side of the spectrum, authors like Cannon find that a disregard for institutionalization may have been necessary in a country like Venezuela to pursue social justice (Cannon 169). Baxton, another proponent of this view, adds that the authors who label Bolivarian Venezuela as anti-democratic or as a system lacking institutionalization are neglecting the fact that the Bolivarian Revolution seeks to break preconceived notions of democracy. Therefore, new, alternative means to examine it should be developed (Buxton 11). The more pro-Bolivarian authors like Smilde and Hellinger also believe the grassroots aspect of the revolution has yet to be institutionalized. However, they praise the levels of legitimacy that the system has while agreeing with Baxton in saying that our notions of institutionalization and civil society are not up to date with the changes that are occurring in Venezuela (Smilde 12-24; Hellinger 341).

Bolivarian Discourse

One of the aspects of the Bolivarian Revolution that was examined in this study is the discourse of President Chávez. Although the findings by Hawkins relate to populism and not to movementism, his findings are nonetheless very relevant for my study. He found that Chávez used a very populist discourse that was easily comparable to the discourse of other populist leaders. In that comparison, however, Hawkins found that Chávez engaged in this type of discourse far more often. Finally, the populist aspect of Chávez's discourse that was most

repeated was the “Good vs. Evil.” This type of discourse consisted in making the opponent seem evil, oligarchic and elitist, while he represented the good and the will of the people (Hawkins 82).

Bypass of the Electoral Framework

Another author’s analysis that was very useful as a reference in this study was the one by Brewer-Carías in regards to the constitutional reform of 2007. He found that many of the constitutional reforms that were rejected by the Venezuelan people have been implemented in Venezuela mainly by three different means: legislation via decrees by President Chávez, legislation in the National Assembly, and judicial interpretation. The author considers these implementations as fraudulent since the constitution prohibits the implementation of laws that have been rejected in popular consultation (Brewer-Carías 329). His analysis is useful because it recognizes the complexity of these implementations. It is particularly difficult to trace most of them because of different reasons. Some laws had different names, others were implemented partially by one branch without enacting any law, and others were attached to other bigger laws, which made them unnoticeable (Brewer-Carías 333). Moreover, a few laws were also implemented even before the full project was submitted for popular consultation (Brewer-Carías 330).

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

Although the main figure behind the Bolivarian Revolution has died, questions in regards to the level of institutionalization that *el proceso* has accomplished become more relevant than ever, and Venezuela provides an even greater opportunity to study the evolution of movement

politics. As discussed, the Bolivarian Revolution began as a movement in the form of MBR-200. Since then, the parties that have supported Hugo Chávez have attempted to distance themselves from movement politics by unifying first into the MVR, and then into the PSUV (Unified Socialist Party of Venezuela). Other efforts to institutionalize the movement include the holding of primaries to choose candidates for the legislative elections in 2010, and even a tweet on President Chávez's Twitter account where he confirmed he had spoken to his contender Capriles Radonski after his defeat to encourage unity in Venezuela.⁶ The most important indicator of institutionalization in the PSUV is the fact that Venezuela has held multiple elections in the last 15 years, several of them being referenda. The idea of *democracia participativa* that Chávez had championed well at least in the increasing number of elections and referenda since 1998 does definitely give the Bolivarian Revolution a high level of legitimacy for many authors and, most importantly, for most Venezuelans too. However, Chávez's charisma and populist rhetoric that had worried the Venezuelan left in the 1990s continued to be present in *el proceso*, and that, among many other factors, has led some analysts to argue that the left in Venezuela had become dependent upon Hugo Chávez.

This study attempts to assess that level of dependency of the left on Chávez by studying the degrees of institutionalization in the Bolivarian Revolution mainly through studying the PSUV. A high degree of movementism would suggest that the Revolution is still leader-centered, and a high level of institutionalization would suggest that the Revolution has established roots in society that are far beyond the figure of President Chávez. Two questions are then formulated: What aspects of movementism are still present in the Revolution? To answer this question, the definition of a political movement used above was broken up in two factors. The first factor is

⁶ "Chávez conversó con Capriles y llamó a la unidad nacional." Telesur Telesurtv.net

the degree to which the Revolution seeks to control the state via nonelectoral means and the extent to which the Revolution accepts competition with other parties as a legitimate power game. The next factor is whether the movementist aspects of the Revolution are sufficient to impede the process of routinization. In order to answer this question, the four criteria established by Mainwaring in terms of what constitutes an institutionalized political party would be considered. These criteria are:

1. Stability in the rules and nature of interparty competition
2. Establishment of stable roots in society
3. Elections as the primary route to governing
4. Party organization that is independent of ambitious leaders⁷

Before discussing the different variables that were employed, it is important to discuss the problems that may arise when studying a country undergoing such important political and social changes like Venezuela. It has been argued that measuring and studying Venezuelan democracy according to world standards is difficult due to the fact that one of the major premises of the Bolivarian Revolution is to implement a new form of democracy that replaces the notions of representative democracy with participatory democracy. It has also been argued that, even before the Bolivarian Revolution, Venezuelan democracy has always been full of particularities since, as a petrostate, the Venezuelan government has been expected to exert a higher level of control in society in order to distribute the oil revenues (Hellinger 164-165). AD and COPEI, although being highly institutionalized, held a tight control over society to impede other actors from participating in the democratic process too. Another fact that makes the Venezuelan case problematic is that the polarization that exists in Venezuelan society for more than a decade has

⁷ Mainwaring, Scott, and Scully, Timothy. *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*. Page 5

transcended to the academic literature. To overcome these challenges, this study has attempted to focus on the Venezuelan context. By discussing how the Punto Fijo system operated and how the opposition in Venezuela operates now, this study also seeks to explain the uniqueness of the Bolivarian Revolution. While all the variables studied are applicable to all democracies, the discussion of the results and implications are applicable to the model that has been established in Venezuela, which is the model of participatory democracy. The variable in regards to the bypass of electoral framework, for example, was specifically examined in the context of Venezuela. An emphasis has been placed on elections and popular participation, and considering the changes that Venezuela has been experiencing, a bypass of the electoral framework may be more problematic there than in a nation with the standard representative democracy.

My contribution to the scholarly work is not found in making a comparison between the Bolivarian and the Punto Fijo model in regards to which one is more democratic since defining democracy is problematic both in Venezuela and elsewhere. Furthermore, it may be argued that the Bolivarian model has attempted to create more spaces for civil society to emerge and be less dependent upon institutions. One of these spaces is the communal council, a citizen-formed assembly that seeks to ensure the well-being of the community to which they belong by becoming more independent from government entities. In reality, the communal councils are closely tied to the executive, which suggests that the patterns of clientelism from the Fourth Republic have not disappeared (Hellinger 165). Other policies that have been implemented by the national government, such as the social missions to improve living standards and empower individuals, also have a top-down quality to them (Hawkins, Rosas, and Johnson 211). In this sense, discussions about institutionalism are still relevant because the parallel spaces that have been created do not undermine the nature of the typical political process where parties are

essential. The means to empower citizens are very dependent upon the executive to be considered fully institutionalized in their own realm. For this reason, my contribution is focused on empirically assessing whether the Bolivarian model has successfully made the transition from a political movement to a political party. Movementism, as McGuire has argued, is indeed very damaging to democracy, but this does not necessarily mean that the system is entirely undemocratic. Henceforth, I avoided engaging in extensive discussions about the effects of movementism on Venezuelan democracy. I did, however, measure the effects that the elements of movementism have on the party's effort to institutionalize.

The Venezuelan case, although both atypical and difficult to measure in many areas, still relies on regular party competition in order to assert control of the country, which makes the measurement of the research question not only possible in a polarized context, but also necessary in order to assess the efficiency of the PSUV in a democracy. My initial argument is that the elements of movementism that are present in the party have indeed harmed its ability to become an institutionalized political party. While the party members do share a common set of values, which according to McGuire, is an important indicator of strength, my argument is that Chávez's charismatic authority remains the most important force within the party, and perhaps even within the entire political system in Venezuela. Charisma "is a type of authority based on the shared belief that a certain person has extraordinary insight into the right way to live and to organize the community" (McGuire 15). Even after his death, Chávez's voice was heard in the most recent Maduro campaign rallies as enthusiasts hold posters with Chávez's face on it. When he was alive, he controlled the party to a great extent. Even when the party sought to institutionalize by holding primaries and holding citizen assemblies to nominate candidates, Chávez usually had the last say. During a rally in the state of Carabobo in August, 2012, Chávez publicly announced his

decision to make Ameliach replace Maduro as a candidate for the state governorship in the elections to be held December 2012. The public at the rally clearly protested this decision, to which Chávez responded almost aggressively, “What’s at stake here is the October 7th election [in reference to the presidential election]... This is not about a particular face or about Ameliach. I have said it: Ameliach will be the candidate for the state of Carabobo!”⁸ Instances like these, where Chávez took a very personal approach to politics, were not uncommon in his administration.

Relevance of the Research Question

In the Venezuelan context, studying the level of institutionalism in a political party as powerful as the PSUV is extremely relevant now that President Chávez has died. Prior to his death, the highly personalistic ways in which Chávez governed were criticized by both the left and right in Venezuela and elsewhere. The charisma and leadership of President Chávez was often cited as one of the many factors that explained the accomplishments of the Bolivarian Revolution. If Chávez was so essential to the development of the party, then, by definition, the party may be forced to speed up its process of routinization now that he is not present. If the process of routinization has not been successful in the past years, then it can be argued that the party could face important challenges to secure control of the state. So far, it seems like the leadership of the PSUV is purposely trying to keep politics Chávez-centered to face those challenges. Although this strategy may work due to the fact that the PSUV is indeed a very strong party, the current events continue to be vital to study movement politics. If political parties are not institutionalized and remain political movements, the democracy in which they participate is highly unpredictable, which diminishes stability. In this sense, studying

⁸ “Chávez names Amerliach as Candidate in Carabobo, substituting Maduro.” (El Universal, 5 August 2012). The statement’s translation to English is my own.

institutionalization in the PSUV is not only important to define the challenges that the Bolivarian Revolution may face now that Chávez is gone, but also to study the challenges that the entire democratic system in Venezuela may encounter if routinization is not completed.

These questions in regards to the institutionalization of the PSUV are extremely relevant in a Latin American context. For many years, South America has been ruled by neoliberal governments who had very close ties to the so-called Washington Consensus. It isn't until 1998, with the rise of Hugo Chávez as a potential winner for the presidential election in Venezuela that a new left begins to emerge. This is not to say that this new left is uniform all across South America, now a continent where the majority of the states have governments with leftist sets of values. The new Left may be viewed on a continuum, where Chávez in Venezuela, Morales in Bolivia, and Correa in Ecuador would be placed in the radical left, the Kirchners in Argentina somewhere in the middle, and Lula in Brazil would be placed in the more conservative or pragmatic end of the spectrum (Morales and Castañeda 10). Although these governments are different in how they approach local issues, they have all distanced themselves from the Washington Consensus by either rejecting the neoliberal framework in its entirety or by rejecting it partially. Conservative or radical, the influence that Chávez had on the new left as its pioneer cannot be ignored. Politics in Latin America, especially in countries like Bolivia and Ecuador, has changed dramatically after the rise of Chávez. His model of participatory democracy has been employed in Ecuador and Bolivia extensively. Therefore, at least for these two states that have modeled their systems after the Venezuelan one, there could also be a risk of dependency upon leaders, which may lead to instability.

The influence and political leadership that Venezuela had in the region during the Chávez era also makes the question of institutionalism for states outside of the region very important.

The Washington-Caracas relations saw very difficult times in the Chávez administration as Chávez's Socialism of the XXI Century threatened the neoliberal model and some free market policies that the US sought to implement in Latin America for most of the last century. Most states in South America have reformed the way they handle their diplomatic and political relations with the United States. It can be argued that Chávez was one of the leaders that created a network of support in the region for decisions that asserted the different states' sovereignty and independence. As US military bases were closed in Ecuador, and as the entire region has moved towards encouraging closer relations with Cuba, it is clear that South America was fundamentally changed by Hugo Chávez's leadership. Assessing how stable the Bolivarian Revolution is now that Chávez has died is of vital importance to the US if it seeks to have better relations with the entire region.

Measures

Bolivarian Discourse

Since Chávez's discourse has become essential to the Bolivarian Revolution (Hawkins 50-63), it was an important variable in order to assess how the Bolivarian Revolution views the other sectors that participate in the political process. It is also important to examine Chávez's discourse in regards to the other factor that is evaluated in this study, which is the level in which the Bolivarian Revolution is committed to elections as a means to control the state. If these two factors, which represent a lack of commitment with the democratic process in the sense that it is nonelectoral and disregards competition, are present, then it can be said that the Bolivarian Revolution has a movementist discourse. President Chávez, as the main leader of the movement and former president of the PSUV, had a very clear control over the party. Chávez's personal

views have often been reiterated by other PSUV elected officials, which is another indicator of how influential Chávez's discourse was for the movement.

From January 2009 until January 2011, Chávez wrote a series of columns that were published online in the PSUV official website as well as in several pro-Bolivarian newspapers. These were usually published Tuesdays, Thursdays, and/or Sundays, but did not follow a strict publication schedule. "Las Lineas de Chávez," as they were titled, were very personal and discussed several different and unrelated themes in one single publication. The 104 articles that were available online were enumerated. Then, I proceeded to examine which articles were written during campaign periods and excluded those articles. In Venezuela, campaign periods have a start and end date that is officially set by a government body called the National Electoral Council (CNE). Depending on the election, these official campaign periods can last anywhere from a couple of weeks to three months. From January 2009 until January 2011, two major elections took place in Venezuela: The referendum of February 2009 to amend the constitution and make reelections of public officials unlimited, and the legislative elections of September 2010. The campaign periods for these elections were one month and two months respectively. Verifying the official start and end dates on CNE's official website, the articles written by Chávez during these periods (a total of 9) were excluded. From the remaining 95 articles, a random sample of 12 articles was chosen by using a random number generator online. In this portion, these 12 articles were looked at to see what type of language President Chávez used when referring to the opposition in Venezuela. The two most important factors being examined here are the two related to McGuire's definition of movementism: disregard of competition with other political sectors and a lack of commitment with the electoral process. It also relates to

Mainwaring's first requirement for an institutionalized political party, which is stability in the rules and nature of interparty competition.

PSUV Vote Share in the National Assembly

The second subject that must be discussed relates directly with the second requirement of an Institutionalized political party, which is the establishment of stable roots in society. To measure this stability of the Bolivarian Revolution, grouping all the parties that have supported *el proceso* at a given point, this part of the study examined the changes in the composition of the National Assembly during three different constitutional periods. These are 2001-2006, 2006-2011, and 2011-2016. What is being evaluated here is a change of political sides, or an increase or decrease of vote share for the PSUV in the National Assembly after the deputies had been elected.

The number of deputies that have switched political sides were compared from period to period in an attempt to find whether these political switches have become more or less common in recent years. Beyond discussion and comparison of the raw numbers at the National Assembly, this section also mentions the cases of several governors who have also switched from pro-Bolivarian to anti-Bolivarian. Finally, this section also discusses the *Ley Antitalanquera*, which punishes deputies who change their political ideology after being elected. A *talánquera* is essentially a wall, but *saltar la talánquera*, which means to jump over the wall, has become a well-known Venezuelan phrase to describe politicians who change ideologies after they have been elected. *La Ley Antitalanquera*, then, seeks to punish these deputies in order to stop the practice from continuing. If there has been a reduction in the practice from period to period, then it can be argued that the Bolivarian Revolution is more committed to institutionalization as it has evolved over time.

Bypass of the Electoral Framework

In Latin America, the practice of governing by presidential decrees is well-known and used by many presidents. In the case of Venezuela in the Punto Fijo system, the legislative body of government was almost powerless due to the fact that decrees had stronger implications in Venezuelan society than laws voted on in the legislature. Under the current system, the Venezuelan Constitution gives the Executive an ability to legislate over a specific period of time in all the areas that he may find pertinent. The constitution establishes that decree laws or *habilitantes* are to be approved by 3/5 of the National Assembly. This qualified majority also has to determine which areas the President would be able to legislate on and for how long (Art 203). President Chávez used this power three times to legislate before, and although the opposition sectors have claimed the *habilitantes* or decrees are unconstitutional, it is a practice that's not uncommon in Latin America, therefore its nature won't necessarily be discussed to a great extent. However, responding to other types of claims that the opposition has made towards the *habilitantes*, this part of the study examined if there's an overlap between the decrees that President Chávez made in 2008 and the proposal to modify the constitution of 2007. The proposal, which intended to give more power to the people through stronger community organization and by socializing the economy further, was rejected by a narrow margin in 2007. An attempt from President Chávez to bypass that fundamental electoral defeat to make sure the constitutional reform would still be implemented would certainly be a disregard of the electoral process. In a state where referenda has been a common practice in the last 15 years because of the idea to move towards a more direct, participatory democracy, ignoring electoral results can be vital in determining whether the government is committed to institutionalization or not.

Research Question and Hypotheses

The main research question of this study is: Has the Bolivarian Revolution routinized? That is, has the movement become an institutionalized political party mainly through the PSUV and other major political parties? Two hypotheses in regards to the matter were also formulated. The first one is that the aspects of movementism that are present within the Bolivarian Revolution are relevant enough to disqualify *el proceso* as an institutionalized system with institutionalized parties. The second hypothesis is that, while the Revolution may not be institutionalized, the successes it has had in institutionalizing itself may describe it as a system in transition, a system that may be struggling with institutionalization, but has had important accomplishments in the area.

RESULTS

Bolivarian Discourse

As was mentioned in the methodology section, movementist discourse can be of two kinds: either disregarding elections as the only way to control the state or disregarding the other political players as legitimate competitors. From the sample of twelve articles, Chávez mentioned the opposition in one way or another in ten of them. Out of these ten articles, Chávez mentioned the opposition directly by using movementist discourse in nine of them. On Article #20 (section II), for example, Chávez referred to the opposition as “that thing they call ‘opposition.’”⁹ In that same paragraph, the president said the opposition was ready to betray the homeland, and for that reason, it had to be “swept” in the legislative elections of September (Lineas de Chávez, August 1, 2010). On Article #45 (Section II), Chávez also disregarded the

⁹ Quotations on the word opposition are found in the original article in Spanish.

opposition as legitimate political adversaries by calling them oligarchs, unpatriotic, irrational, destabilizing, and irresponsible criminals. Moreover, he also threatened the opposition by saying that “the people, the government, and the Bolivarian Armed Forces (the military), in indivisible unity, are ready to defend it [the state]” (Lineas de Chávez, January 31 2010). Another example of movementist discourse employed repeatedly by President Chávez in his columns is the political slogan “Patria Socialista o Muerte,” or “Socialist Homeland or Death.”

After examining the twelve articles that Chávez wrote, it is clear that the Bolivarian Revolution employs movementist discourse constantly. Nine out of twelve articles contained this type of discourse. However, it is important to note that Chávez’s movementist discourse is exclusive to the type of movementist discourse that disregards political opponents. The other kind, which refers to the disregard of electoral processes as the unique way of attaining power is nonexistent in Chávez’s discourse. In fact, even though campaign periods were excluded in this study, Chávez often attempted to motivate his followers to vote and win elections. (See Appendix I for full list of articles examined)

PSUV Vote Share in the National Assembly

The first constitutional period in the National Assembly was from 2000 until 2005. Prior to the National Assembly, Venezuela had a bicameral congress with a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. As has been discussed, the legislature in the Punto Fijo system played a minimum role in policy making, a fact that led to the dissolution of Congress once Chávez became president and the popular approval of the creation of a new constituent body to frame a new constitution. In this constitution, the National Congress became the National Assembly, a unicameral body with far more power than Congress had in the past. As changes to the constitution were proposed and approved by the Venezuelan people in an election with very low turnout, the National

Assembly was elected, and its first composition would be 115 deputies that would be identified as pro-Bolivarian and 50 deputies as anti-Bolivarian. It must be noted that a few parties which are now very active in the opposition as Un Nuevo Tiempo (A New Time) and Proyecto Venezuela were part of this coalition for a short period of time. After the creation of new parties due to division in the pro-Chávez groups, the National Assembly's first constitutional period culminated with a very different deputy composition. By the time new elections had to be called, the pro-Chávez group of deputies that denominated themselves the Block for Change had reduced its composition from 115 to 83 deputies. The opposition block that was called the Block for Legislative Autonomy, however, had increased its composition from 50 deputies to 82 deputies. These numbers represent a total loss of 32 deputies for the Bolivarian Revolution.

The next legislative period in Venezuela was a very peculiar period because the opposition decided to boycott the elections claiming that the elections in Venezuela were fraudulent, a claim they had already made in 2004 when Chávez won the recall referendum. The refusal to participate obviously resulted in an entirely pro-Chávez National Assembly. Although not all the deputies elected were from the same official party, which was the MVR at that time, all deputies were in favor of the Bolivarian Revolution. This would change once proposals for a single, unified socialist party were made. This new party would replace the MVR (Fifth Republic Movement) to become a much larger organization covering a wider array of different groups. Some parties did not adhere to the new party called the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV), but remained loyal to the Revolution, while others distanced themselves completely from the movement like the party PODEMOS (For Social Democracy). Again, due to interparty ideological divisions and intraparty conflict, a total of 19 deputies had left the Bolivarian Revolution by 2010. In this case, the Revolution reduced its composition from 167 deputies to

148. The opposition, which wasn't represented at all due to its decision to boycott the electoral process, now had a total of 19 deputies voting against the Revolution.

Realizing that boycotting elections was a mistake, the opposition in Venezuela decided to actively participate in the 2010 legislative elections. In most instances, they were also unified by using one candidate per district. This strategy turned out to be very positive for the opposition as they were able to break both the 2/3 and the 3/5 majority that the PSUV had in the previous legislative period. The new National Assembly had 98 deputies who supported the Bolivarian Revolution and 67 who didn't. As with previous legislative periods, this number has suffered several changes. Due to the impasse that the governor of Monagas and the PSUV had over a state policy, Governor Briceno and three deputies from his state formed a new party that is now anti-Chávez. However, three deputies from the opposition also changed their ideologies to join the pro-Chávez block in the assembly, which, so far, leaves the legislative body with the same number of deputies in each block (See Appendix II).

Bypass of the Electoral Framework

On the “Anteproyecto de la reforma constitucional presentado por el presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías,” President Chávez presented his official proposal to reform the constitution. This part of the study has found that many aspects of his proposal are now laws in the Venezuelan republic even though these same proposals were rejected by the Venezuelan people in the referendum of 2007. On the “Anteproyecto,” President Chávez proposed to amend articles 328 and 329 of the constitution to change the name of the National Armed Forces into the National Bolivarian Armed Forces (36). On the constitution of 1999, these articles presented the National Armed forces as “an essentially professional institution without political militancy.” The reform in 2007 attempted to change that

aspect to not only change the name, but also make the National Armed Forces “a body essentially patriotic, of the people, and antiimperialistic.” Although the articles are not formally amended, President Chávez did use his decree powers to legislate in favor of his own proposal in July 31, 2008. Decree Law 6.239 changed the name of the armed forces, and mentions that the purpose of defending the state must be understood to be the defense of the Bolivarian, social state that Venezuelans are transitioning into (Gaceta Oficial 5.891).

On June 3, 2008, President Chávez signed Decree Law 6.130 that established the creation of different socio-economic organizations following the “socialist model” (Gaceta Oficial 5.890). This creation is to be administered and sustained centrally by the federal government. This law had also been proposed by President Chávez in his “Anteproyecto.” Article 300 of the 1999 constitution stipulated that the federal government was responsible for creating laws that regulated and ensured the social and economic productivity of the “decentralized entities,” which referred to private actors. In the 2007 referendum, President Chávez proposed the modification of this article by eliminating the word “decentralized,” and by making the federal government responsible for creating laws and regulations “under the principles of a socialist economy” (30).

Another example of the laws that were rejected by the people on a national election and then reintroduced by President Chávez through decree laws is in regards to the Federal Government Council. The concept was introduced in the 1999 constitution as an entity that sought to transform Venezuela into a federal republic in practice. In 2007, President Chávez attempted to change the concept in its entirety by changing the name of the entity to the National Government Council. It was to ensure that states and municipalities followed national, central planning (Chávez Frías 25). On July 15, 2008, Decree Law 6217 allowed the president to do exactly that (Gaceta Oficial 5.890). The president, according to this decree, can now appoint

officials and regional authorities to implement the policies that are in accordance with national planning, a role that may interfere with the role of the governor and the mayor (Brewer-Carias 332).

Other decree laws have presumed connections with the proposed constitutional amendments in 2007. The right to housing and the reduction of the working days, for example, may be other laws that were applied disregarding the 2007 referendum. However, it is much more difficult to trace the reintroduction back to the president because the National Assembly, overwhelmingly chavista at the time, played the largest role in the reintroduction. (Brewer-Carias 336). Although the rest of the reforms have been reintroduced by different means, the three examples provided show a clear involvement of President Chávez in both the reform and the reintroduction processes. Most importantly, the three examples provided in this part of the study represent very important institutional changes that have indeed affected the dynamics of power in the country.

Research Question

After examining three different characteristics of movementism, it is clear that the Bolivarian Revolution has not routinized. President Chávez, while presiding the country, had an intensively movementist discourse even off campaign periods. His disregard for the opposition as a legitimate political actor and his desire to maintain full and permanent control of the state are shown in the columns that were examined. *No volverán*, or “they will not be back [in power]” is one of the famous slogans Chavismo continues to use to this day even as the opposition becomes a powerful political alternative. However, the PSUV does seem to view elections as the primary route to governing, which is one of the main aspects of an institutionalized party in both Mainwaring and McGuire’s assessments of movementism. As it

was discussed, President Chávez was emphatic in his discourse about the need to win elections. On the other, the political unity that PSUV deputies seem to have once they're elected continues to be susceptible to change although, as it was shown, the number of deputies that have switched sides has been decreasing dramatically. This does show that the Bolivarian Revolution is no longer the movement it was when Chávez was first elected into office in 1999. However, the problem of switching political sides is still present. Finally, it has been shown that President Chávez has indeed used his *habilitantes*, or decree laws, to legislate and approve reforms that were rejected by the people in the 2007 referendum. While a precise number to specify how many decree laws bypassed the will of the people was not obtained, the three decree laws shown are among the most controversial due to their ability to significantly alter the functioning of the republic. After examining the three variables in this study, the Bolivarian Revolution and the PSUV have not routinized or become institutional political parties independent of political leaders.

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis I had set established that the aspects of movementism found in the PSUV and in the Bolivarian Revolution in general are enough factors to disqualify the political system as an institutionalized one. While the decreasing number of deputies switching political sides suggests there is stronger political unity in the National Assembly, the Bolivarian Revolution has violated one of its main goals by bypassing the electoral framework. *El proceso*, as it has been discussed, seeks to transform Venezuelan representative democracy into participatory democracy. This means that the people, through several different means but especially via plebiscitary elections, have the last say. President Chávez violated both the principles of participatory and electoral democracy by using his decree powers to legislate in

regards to crucial matters that had been rejected by the people. I consider that this sole reason is important enough to disqualify the Bolivarian Revolution as an institutionalized way of governing.

Hypothesis two, however, suggests that the Bolivarian Revolution may be a system in transition. Looking at the important decreases in PSUV's vote share in the National Assembly, it can be said that the revolution has not stalled as a movement. Although its disregard of the will of the people may impede the qualification of an institutionalized system lead by an institutionalized political party, the Bolivarian Revolution has indeed evolved from the political movement it was more than twenty years ago. Efforts to institutionalize the party in recent years have been important and should not be taken for granted. In this sense, both hypotheses were supported in my study. The Bolivarian Revolution cannot be described as an institutional political system since it has not fully routinized. Moreover, its movementist aspect of bypassing the electoral framework it had established itself in regards to important national transformations is a factor that can disqualify the political system as an institutionalized one. However, the revolution has had positive results in attempting to become an institutionalized system in recent years, which can be seen in the decrease of political shifts in PSUV's elected officials. The Bolivarian Revolution and the PSUV form a system in transition that is no longer a movement, yet it cannot be considered fully institutionalized either due to important violations of the principles of both electoral and participatory democracy.

DISCUSSION

My study has focused on the aspects that make the Bolivarian Revolution a system that lacks institutionalization from the side of the pro-Chávez groups, i.e. the PSUV. However, there

are other major actors that form part of the system by opposing it. In other words, the opposition in Venezuela is also a part of the Bolivarian Revolution not because it wants to, but because it has to adhere to the Bolivarian rules of the political game if it wants to gain control of the nation. This acceptance of the Bolivarian framework on the part of the opposition has not always dominated the faction, however. At the beginning of President Chávez's first term, the elites in Caracas attempted to co-opt and negotiate with him to maintain control of state resources. As President Chávez rejected the proposals made by these sectors, the elite grew increasingly hostile towards President Chávez, waging a war in the media to disqualify him as a democrat. After attempting to change public opinion from the media, the opposition then began to persuade the military to oust him in 2002. Once the coup d'état had consummated, the opposition put itself in power, sought to arrest the chavistas that had been in power, and restored much of the latifundio practices that had begun to change (Dominguez 118). Most importantly, the opposition abolished the constitution that had been approved by the people two years before. Once Chávez took back the presidency two days later, the opposition continued to attack his government by calling for an oil strike that paralyzed the country, and then by attempting to recall him in the 2004 referendum. All of these attempts failed, and Chávez was victorious as his regime strengthened (McCoy 88). As has been discussed, the opposition did not participate in the 2005 legislative elections, which resulted in a National Assembly that supported President Chávez in its totality. In conclusion, the opposition was heavily anti-democratic throughout Chávez's first presidential term. Instead of accepting the democratic rules, the opposition spent the first five or six years engaging in causing chaos "through a national wave of unrest and confrontation" (Dominguez 125). Although President Chávez announced more coup attempts and assassination plots in the late 2000s, the opposition had begun to change strategies, which has had very positive outcomes

for them in more recent elections. Yet, just as Chávez's party seems to struggle with institutionalization, the opposition has engaged in extreme movementist behavior as a way of attaining power too. Ignoring elections and engaging in actions such as the coup in 2002, it is clear that the opposition also evolved from *Puntofijismo* into a political movement. Recalling from the results section, where it was noted that deputies that represented the opposition have also switched political sides, it should be said that the opposition also continues to struggle to become an institutionalized faction of society. Touching upon this point is very important since one of my study's focuses was the way upon which Chávez viewed the opposition. The results from examining his Bolivarian discourse showed that he did not regard the opposition segment of society as a legitimate one, which was consistent with movementism. However, it is important to pose the following question: Could have Chávez regarded the opposition any differently after the many attempts they made to oust him? My initial answer is that he couldn't. Yet, the opposition, very much like the *chavismo*, has had important changes in the last few years. In 2010, they participated in the legislative election, which broke the absolute majority that the PSUV had had. And in 2012, they backed a single candidate that was able to get 44% of the vote against Chávez's 55% and accepted the defeat. However, these efforts towards institutionalization may have suffered a setback in the April 2013 presidential elections when opposition candidate Henrique Capriles Radonski refused to recognize the results because of a very narrow defeat. Yet, as the recount proposal was accepted by the National Electoral Council very recently at the time of writing, it is difficult to know at this point whether Capriles was exercising his right to audit the results or if he was simply sabotaging democracy.

Other considerations in regards to the extent to which the political shifts in elected officials have affected *Chavismo* should be mentioned. Beyond the National Assembly, three

governors have switched to the opposition after being elected as PSUV candidates in 2008. These are the governor of Monagas, Amazonas, and Lara. Among these three, the governor of Lara, one of the most populous states, has become a very popular political actor in the opposition. In the April 2013 election, for example, Governor Henri Falcón of Lara was the director of Capriles' campaign. In order to stop these switches, the PSUV approved a law in the previous legislative session called the *Ley Antitalanquera*. This law sanctions the deputies in the National Assembly who show signs of a "political or ideological change" in their positions since they were elected by suspending them. Some of these signs include voting with the contrary political force (Flores Art 30). The process of suspending a deputy due to a political shift, however, has to be initiated by either citizens or a deputy within the same political force that the deputy is expected to represent (Flores Art 31). As the PSUV has recently benefited from the switches made on the side of the opposition at the National Assembly, the process has not been initiated.

These considerations in regards to the opposition are very important because they explain the context in which Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution has developed. Under such a hostile context, it may have been impossible for Chávez's party to institutionalize when the system had to fight the lack of institutionalism that the other major political actors had. Although this is an important point that may justify President Chávez's discourse, I do not believe it justifies the bypassing of the electoral framework when one of the main pillars of the Bolivarian Revolution is participatory democracy.

Other violations of the model of participatory democracy are less obvious, but may also represent bypasses of the electoral framework nonetheless. In the 2008 regional elections, opposition candidate Antonio Ledezma won the election in the Capital District of Caracas,

making him the most important mayor in the country. Shortly after his victory, President Chávez announced that he had assigned Jacqueline Faría to fill the post of Chief of Government of the Capital District, a newly created position by him under Decree Law 6217. The creation of this post reduced the functions of the mayor in number and gave less autonomy to Caracas from the federal government. Finally, during the lame duck period of the last National Assembly, after it was known that the opposition had broken both the 2/3 and 3/5 majorities of the PSUV, the legislature approved over 26 laws that have been traced back to the constitutional reform of 2007. One of these is the Law for the Defense of Political Sovereignty and National Determination, which prohibits the foreign finance of national political parties.¹⁰ Also during this lame duck session, another *habilitante*, or power to rule by decree was given to Chávez for a period of eighteen months.

CONCLUSION

The Bolivarian Revolution suffers from movementism on both sides of the equation. Both the opposition via the Democratic Unity Coalition (MUD) and the government via the PSUV lack a necessary level of institutionalism that can guarantee the stability of the country. While the hegemonic government of President Chávez ensured stability because of his enormous popularity, the political game in Venezuela has changed now that he's dead. On April 14, 2013, the Chavismo faced its biggest setback since President Chávez won the 1998 elections. Nicolás Maduro, the successor Chávez had named, won the presidential election with a difference of less than 2 percentage points, or a couple hundred thousand votes.¹¹ Although the first read of the

¹⁰ “En dos semanas la AN aprobó la reforma rechazada en 2007” El Universal. 26 December, 2010.

¹¹ National Electoral Council (CNE) www.cne.gob.ve

election should be that Chavismo without Chávez is possible, the fact that Henrique Capriles Radonski was able to appeal to many more voters than he had had just five months before may be a reflection of the weakness of Chavismo without Chávez. With the instability that the upcoming audit of the elections brought to the country and the several economic problems Venezuela is facing today, the Bolivarian chapter in Venezuelan history is not over. Now, the Bolivarian Revolution will attempt to recover the political capital it had just five months ago when President Chávez won handedly. The setback the revolution suffered may be due to movement politics and dependence upon Hugo Chávez, or it may also be due to a poor choice of candidate/successor by President Chávez. Economic and social problems, too, could have enabled the opposition forces to become statistically just as large as the government forces. The causes of the setback may have been many, but what can't be disputed is the fact that Venezuela had an important political transformation in favor of the opposition just two months after the death of President Chávez. Moreover, the Bolivarian Revolution has also become increasingly unstable after the election as the opposition and the national administration refuse to engage in civilized dialogue.¹²

¹² “Venezuela’s MPs in punch-up over disputed election” BBC 30 April 2013

APPENDIX I

BOLIVARIAN DISCOURSE

ARTICLE NUMBER	DATE	TYPE OF DISCOURSE
Article 6	5 December 2010	MOVEMENTIST
Article 20	1 August 2010	MOVEMENTIST
Article 28	29 May 2010	MOVEMENTIST
Article 30	16 May 2010	MOVEMENTIST
Article 44	7 February 2010	MOVEMENTIST
Article 45	31 January 2010	MOVEMENTIST
Article 51	18 December 2009	NEUTRAL
Article 59	1 November 2009	MOVEMENTIST
Article 65	20 September 2009	NEUTRAL
Article 67	6 September 2009	MOVEMENTIST
Article 70	16 August 2009	MOVEMENTIST
Article 79	14 June 2009	NEUTRAL

APPENDIX II

PSUV VOTE SHARE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY	NUMBER OF DEPUTIES CHANGE FOR CHAVISMO	NUMBER OF DEPUTIES CHANGE FOR THE OPPOSITION
2000-2005	-32	+32
2006-2011	-19	+19
2011-2016	-3	-3

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