

Explaining Chavismo:

The Unexpected Alliance of Radical Leftists and the Military
in Venezuela under Hugo Chávez

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Knowing that Venezuela experienced a profound case of growth collapse in the 1980s and 1990s is perhaps enough to understand why Venezuela experienced regime change late in the 1990s. Most political scientists agree with Przeworski et al. (2000) that severe economic crises jeopardize not just the incumbents, but often the very continuity of democratic politics in non-rich countries. However, knowledge of Venezuela's growth collapse is not sufficient to understand why political change went in the direction of chavismo.

By chavismo I mean the political regime established by Hugo Chávez Frías after 1999. Scholars who study Venezuelan politics disagree about the best label to describe the Hugo Chávez administration (1999-present): personalistic, popular, populist, pro-poor, revolutionary, participatory, socialist, Castroite, fascist, competitive authoritarian, soft-authoritarian, third-world oriented, hybrid, statist, polarizing, oil-addicted, ceasaristic, counter-hegemonic, a sort of Latin American Milošević, even political “carnivour.” But there is nonetheless agreement that, at the very least, chavismo consists of a political alliance of radical-leftist civilians and the military (Ellner 2001:9). Chávez has received most political advice from, and staffed his government with, individuals who have an extreme-leftist past, a military background, or both. The Chávez movement is, if nothing else, a marriage of radicals and officers. And while there is no agreement on how undemocratic the regime has become, there is virtual agreement that chavismo is far from liberal democracy. By 2003, it was clear that chavismo, as a political regime, occupied that “grey zone” between democracy and authoritarianism (Coppedge 2003; McCoy 2004) that became increasingly frequent across the planet in the late 2000s (Freedom House 2010).

This chapter focuses on why growth collapse in Venezuela resulted in the rise of a radical leftist-military regime in Venezuela in 1998. As Hellinger (2003) points out, there

was nothing predetermined about this outcome. Regime collapse could have resulted in a number of new regimes led by any number of different “contenders.”

That growth collapse would lead to the rise and consolidation of leftist-military ruling alliance seemed hard to predict based on trends in Latin America and even Venezuela at the time. There is no question that leftist-military ruling alliances are not new in Latin America (Remmer 1991), dating back to Cuba in the 1930s, when a young sargeant, Fulgencio Batista, sought to dominate Cuban politics by courting radical leftist civilians (first, student leaders, and then, Communists). However, since the Omar Torrijos administration in Panama (1968-1978), no major episode of electorally successful leftist-civilian-military alliances occurred in Latin America until Chávez. While the economic crises in the 1960s and 1970s led to military regimes in South America, since the 1980s the military has tended to distance itself from the political sphere (Bustamante 1998), and the left, from the military. In the early 1990s, the common response to the economic woes of the region was the emergence of market-oriented administrations. While few of these administrations actually campaigned on a market-oriented platform, they responded to growth collapse by introducing more economic liberalization rather than less. And despite a leftward regional trend in the 2000s, only a few governments (mostly in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua) have been as radically leftist as Chavismo, and even fewer, as militaristic.

This chapter argues that to understand the rise of the leftist-civilian military coalition that Chávez cobbled together in 1998-99, one has to understand the story of incorporation of non-dominant political groups in Venezuelan politics starting in the 1960s. Most of the scholarship seeking to explain Chavismo argues that the previous regime, the so-called “Fourth Republic,” or the “Punto Fijo Regime,” suffered from excessively exclusionary politics: political institutions became too rigid to give entry to new, smaller, non-dominant political forces, which led to accumulated resentment, inability to implement necessary reforms, and in the end, an a strong anti-status quo sentiment by

an increasingly large unincorporated sectors. The old regime benefited only two parties, AD and COPEI, and no one else. According to this view, chavismo was, at its core, a movement designed to break down institutional barriers, propelled by a mushrooming civil society that felt trapped by non-accommodating institutions. I seek to modify the view of pre-existing institutional rigidity and closure. While some institutions did remain closed and even ossified, the most important story is how many other political institutions actually offered shelter to a number of non-dominant forces, which I will call “small opposition forces” (*SOFs*). Until the 1990s, these *SOFs*, many of which were ideologically on the far left, were not governing in Venezuela, but they were not entirely homeless, and in fact often found themselves in propitious environments for growth. These institutional homes were the universities (starting in the late 1960s), the military (starting in the late 1970s), institutions of civil society such as small parties and neighborhood associations (starting in the 1980s), and national and subnational executive and legislative branches of government (starting in the 1990s). It was this degree of institutional sheltering, together with two decades of growth collapse, that explains why leftist *SOFs* grew in numbers large enough to sustain a new ruling coalition and learned to work with the military to a degree that had few parallels in the region.

This chapter thus applies the argument that I develop in Corrales (2008), following Cleary (2006) and Schamis (2006), that the rise of the left in Latin America in the 2000s is the result of both gripes (i.e., complaints about the socioeconomic status quo) *and* institutional opportunities. I agree with scholars on Venezuela who virtually unanimously argue that citizens by the late 1990s had ample reasons to vote for an anti-status quo option, but I disagree with those who underplay the institutional openings of the Punto Fijo.

The second question I address is how the chavista coalition evolved over time. That Chávez succeeded in putting together a leftist-military coalition does not mean that it

was easy to keep it together for 10 years. Friction has always existed within the coalition, both between and within civilians and the military, yet Chávez has always been able to form cabinets in which leftist civilians and the military work side by side. While the non-leftist military (the rebels of the Plaza de Altamira, the participants of the 2002 coup, and the many “*dados-de-baja*”) as well as the non-authoritarian left (e.g., the MAS) have abandoned the government, the leftist-military alliance has survived to this day. Table 1 provides just one indicator of the continuity of military influence: the number of military officials in high-level positions in the cabinet remained quite significant by 2008. Understanding the survival of this coalition requires looking at what scholars often call coalition-building “toolkits.” Specifically, presidential coalitions depend on the system of incentives and penalties that the state deploys to neutralize dissenters and coopt allies. In keeping the leftist-military alliance together, Chávez has had to deal with two different sources of tensions within his initial coalition: 1) the defection of moderate leftists, and 2) divisions within the military. To deal with these cracks, Chávez has deployed both tangible and intangible political resources. Most scholars understand the role that tangible state-based resources (e.g., spending, government jobs, state contracts) play in sealing these cracks. I want to focus instead on intangible political resources at home, specifically, the deliberate use of 1) polarization; 2) corruption and impunity for supporters; and 3) job discrimination and other legal abuses for opponents. These three political resources are part of the glue that holds Chávez’s radical-military alliance in place. There are other toolkits in addition to these, mostly in the realm of foreign policy. But because of space constraints, I will discuss only the domestic toolkits. For more international politics, see (Corrales 2009; Romero and Corrales Forthcoming)

This paper, therefore, wishes to move the debate about *chavismo* away from demand-side theories, which treat Chávez’s radicalism as responses to what the majorities presumably want. Invoking the demand side is insufficient; it explains the desire for a

change in 1999, but not why the change supplied was as radical, as militaristic, and as reliant on polarization, corruption, and discrimination as *chavismo* has been.

I. A look at the *first* chavistas

How should one study the composition of the *chavista* coalition, and especially that of its leadership? What circles of Venezuelan society did Chávez draw from in order to appoint leaders? To answer these questions, I decided to look at the socioeconomic profile of the first set of leaders who ran under the *Movimiento Quinta República* (MVR), the party formed by Chávez to run for office in 1998. In an innovative study of the origins of Peronism in Argentina, Aelo (2004) follows a similar research strategy. He looks at the political background of the first set of candidates in the province of Buenos Aires running under the Peronist banner for the general elections of 1946. This exercise allows Aelo to determine the exact origin of Argentina's new "*élite dirigente*"—whether they were mostly newcomers, conservative, socialist, radicals, renovators, laborists, etc. Looking at the profile of the first set of leaders in an election provides a window into both the groups that support a new leader and the sectors from which the new leader draws allies.

Following Aelo, Table 2 provides the political/professional background of every delegate who participated in the 1999 Constituent Assembly. This information has never been reported elsewhere. Because the *chavista* candidates were very carefully and strategically selected by the incumbent, and more specifically, the Executive branch (Penfold 1999; Hawkins 2003; Kornblith 2003), the list reveals the sectors that were supporting Chávez, and vice versa. The table reveals, first, that the three largest professions represented were: professional politicians (46.72 percent), military (15.57 percent), and university professors (19.67 percent). If one includes the professional politicians who also taught part-time at the university, the total percentage for university professors is 32.78 percent. Second, there were two careers that were significantly

underrepresented: labor leaders and economists. In fact, among the chavistas, there were more former guerrillas (3) than economists (2). The presence of so many university professors, military individuals, and career politicians suggests that Chávez is drawing from a pool of Venezuelan citizens that is not entirely composed of newcomers (given the large number of career politicians) or non-elites (given the large number of attorneys and high-ranking soldiers). Furthermore, Chávez was drawing significantly from university intellectuals (given the large numbers of university professors), but not exactly economists.

I will show that this particular pool—anti-status quo politicians, intellectuals, and soldiers—was large in Venezuela by the late 1990s. And rather than being marginalized and excluded, these groups were well protected by some of the most privileged institutions of the Punto Fijo regime. But before developing these points, I briefly review some of the alternative theories that seek to explain the rise of chavismo.

II. Rival Explanations

A. Social Immiseration

The simplest explanation for the rise of chavismo focuses on social immiseration: the idea that Chavismo is the product of poverty expansion following growth collapse. According to this view, Chávez is “the vehicle for implementing a more just social order that had been called for by average citizens for decades” (Gibbs 2006:276). Kenneth Roberts (2003) does a terrific job conceptualizing the grave social deterioration that took place in Venezuela since 1982 and encompassed: 1) economic immiseration, 2) growing inequality, 3) expansion of informality in labor markets, and 4) declining capacity of labor unions to represent workers. Economic hardship *combined with* a labor representation crisis led to protest politics, and thus, to the rise of a leftist replacement. According to this

school, the popular sectors wanted a government that addressed the “root causes” of economic poverty—namely, the prevailing “social apartheid”—rather than merely the institutional imperfections of the political system (Lander 2005). Chávez is therefore seen as a response to this demand—the first leader to “talk about *pueblo*” (Lander 2005) and to “prioritize the demands of the popular sectors” rather than the middle and upper classes which wanted to focus only on institutional imperfections (García-Guadilla 2005:114).

The problem with a strictly structural-sociological account as an explanation for chavismo, even supplemented with a focus on labor politics, is not that it is wrong, but that it is indeterminate. It focuses mostly on the demand side (why were citizens willing to vote for messianic politics), but not on the supply side (why was the solution delivered of the leftist-military, semi-authoritarian variety). To be sure, a surplus of poor people explains the Chávez election in 1998, but also the election of (at least) the two previous presidents—each ideologically different. Since Venezuela has had surplus poverty since the 1980s, all presidents by necessity must have obtained much of the vote of the poor to beat their rivals. Roberts’ characterization of Venezuela in 1998 could very well apply to Venezuela ten years before, or for that matter, Latin America as a whole in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Yet, it was only in Venezuela in the late 1990s that there was an electoral rise of a radical leftist/military government. Another problem with a demand-based account is that salient policies of chavismo—such as discrimination against dissenters, special privileges to the military and other elites, and increasing corruption—are not easily explained by social immiseration.

B. Institutional Closure

Other scholars explain Chavismo by looking at the political institutions of the preceding regime and argue that Chávez mobilized groups that felt unrepresented by

existing institutions. The idea that Latin America's democracies were too shallow, unrepresentative, and institutionally exclusionary of new actors became a common complaint of many scholars and citizens across the region in the 1990s. In Venezuela, there is no question that the two most significant political institutions—the two large parties, AD and COPEI, and labor unions—were suffering from a “crisis of representation,” and losing voters in large numbers since the 1980s. A key question to ask about institutions is, why did the traditional parties cease being an option in the mid 1990s, whereas the radical left managed to capture this vacuum by first aligning itself with an old establishment figure such as Rafael Caldera (1994-1999) and then with the military under Chávez?

The answer in the literature goes something like this. Venezuela, like the rest of the region, experienced the typical collapse of its statist economic model in the early 1980s (Naim and Piñango 1984). Because the political parties were unable to renew themselves (Corrales 2002; Ellner 2003; Molina 2004; Myers 2004), they were unable to provide appropriate policy responses to the economic crises (Kelly and Palma 2004) and to let go of their special privileges (Hellinger 2003). Voters responded as they have elsewhere in the region when macroeconomic instability endured: they blamed the incumbents and existing political institutions (see Remmer 2003 for the region; Gil Yepes 2004 for Venezuela; Myers 2007), defected toward smaller parties, which in Venezuela, were all on the left (Molina 2004), increasingly anti-status quo and intensely disdainful of the traditional parties (see Schedler 1996 for a definition of anti-establishment). Those who did not find these parties appealing formed or joined institutions of civil society (García-Guadilla 2002; Canache 2004; Salamanca 2004), Márquez).

The rise of Chávez may thus be considered the result of two different institutional developments—the rise of extreme, formerly marginal, parties at the expense of traditional parties and the momentous rise of defiant civic organizations that were more antipartisan

than nonpartisan (see Alvarez 2006). By promising to carry out this displacement—in collaboration with the military—Chávez was able to win the support of these two new societal blocks.

It may very well be, as some theories argue, that political exclusion breeds radicalism and anti-status quo sentiments. But it does not follow that political inclusion is necessarily an antidote against radicalism. In section III, I show that in Venezuela, institutions provided refuge to, and actually served as an incubator of, the anti-status quo activists.

The question still remains as to why traditional parties failed to offer appropriate policy responses to economic crises in the 1990s. Elsewhere I have argued that the lack of democratic, competitive primaries within the traditional parties, especially AD, created party oligarchies that were unable to adapt and incorporate new knowledge and new blood in the early 1990s (Corrales 2002). What is harder to answer is why the Caldera administration, which was supported by presumably more internally democratic parties such as the MAS, also failed. The explanation could very well be a different variable altogether: the post-1992 rise of party fragmentation—or more broadly, an expansion in the number of veto players, as Monaldi et al. (2005) well argue. We know that party fragmentation and the multiplication of veto players hinders economic governance (World Bank 2002; IDB 2005). A more adept leader, perhaps one less tied to Venezuela's former bipartisanship, might have been able to better manage party fragmentation (DiJohn 2004). My contribution to this debate is that the non-adaptability of traditional parties also has to do with a technical-expertise deficit across traditional parties.

C. Extreme or Aborted Neoliberalism?

Another argument about the rise of the left in Venezuela focuses on the rise of neoliberalism in 1990s. According to this view, chavismo can be construed as the expected backlash against the neoliberal policies and forces of the 1990s. Students of neoliberalism from different ideological perspectives (c.f. Przeworski 1991; Green 2003; Easterly 2006) recognize that market-reforms generate losers, at least in the short term, that can mobilize and protest the reforms. A good example of this argument applied to Venezuela is perhaps Buxton (2003) (see also Lander 2005). In her account, Venezuela suffered the ravages of orthodox neoliberal adjustment, first under Carlos Andrés Pérez between 1989 and 1992 and then under Rafael Caldera between 1996 and 1998. She echoes the typical view on the left that market reforms aggravate poverty. The evidence relies on the uncontested findings that the 1990s was characterized by de-industrialization, which led to “growing fragmentation and informalisation” of labor markets, which in turn, produced the breeding ground for “populist/outsider strategies” (see DiJohn 2004).

Yet, the blame-neoliberalism argument seems overstated, in part because it is not clear that neoliberalism was overwhelmingly applied in Venezuela (Corrales 2002). In terms of fiscal adjustment (i.e., efforts to reduce spending to restore macroeconomic balance), the Venezuelan state did indeed make aggressive attempts on at least three occasions since 1981. But in terms of actual implementation of market-oriented structural reforms, Venezuela is a non-achiever. In virtually no serious index of neoliberalism does Venezuela appear as an accomplished case. Compared with the most sweeping liberalizers in the region (Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Mexico), Venezuela’s reforms were haphazard, incoherent, and incomplete. There was trade liberalization, but not banking liberalization. There were privatizations, but only in a few sectors. There were no serious pension, labor, fiscal, and education reforms. Many old statist structures remained unreformed.

More so than neoliberalism per se, it's the "decline" of private sector investment since its peak in the early 1980s and the "instability and inefficiency" of public sector investment that has generated high unemployment, and thus poverty (Freije in Márquez and Piñango 2003:172). And this decline was probably the result of factors other than neoliberalism, such as political instability in 1989 and 1992-93, persistent inflation, the banking crisis of 1994-96, and the exogenous shocks of 1997-99. To be sure, Pérez and Caldera achieved trade opening and a few grand privatizations, but crucial elements of the old statist model (heavy dependence on state investments and oil, market rigidities, fiscal volatility, inflation and rent-seeking) survived through the 1990s. Venezuela's level of private investment in 1998, although greater than in 1989, was still far below that of its neighbors (see Figure 1). Nelson Ortiz (2004) adds that, as a result of the 1994-96 banking crisis and the state-heavy response to it, the private sector actually became weaker and smaller. If so, it is hard to make the case that Venezuela became dominated in the 1990s by neoliberal barons and forces. Venezuela's political economy in the 1990s is best described as a case of lingering statism, perplexing policy incoherence, domestic financial incoherence and inability to stabilize oil income streams.

A different version of the blame-neoliberalism argument is to stress precisely the negative effects of erratic (as opposed to full) implementation of market reforms. Venezuela between 1983 and 1998 found itself in vicious cycle of aborted market reforms. Governments would launch a relatively severe adjustment package only to relax implementation a few years, sometimes months, later, culminating in yet another economic collapse and prompting the subsequent administration to start again. I have called this the ax-relax-collapse cycle (Corrales 2000; 2010). It started with Herrera Campíns, and was repeated by every administration since then. The result of erratic neoliberalism from 1983 to 1998 was that Venezuela ended with the worse of both worlds: the adjustment periods produced the negative impact on low-income groups that is typical of adjustment programs

at first (recessions, declines in social spending) and the subsequent abandoning of the reforms precluded any of the economic gains that could have helped low-income groups (return of sustained growth, greater private investment and thus private sector employment, lower inflation and thus greater purchasing power for low-income groups). Figure 2 provides some evidence for the aborted-reforms argument. The figure shows, first, volatility of fiscal spending since the 1980s, which is consistent with the notion of repeated cycles of aborted reforms, and second, how poverty deteriorates (in the 1980s) and fails to improve (in the 1990s), which is consistent with the argument about obtaining the worse of both worlds.

Yet, blaming neoliberalism—even if stated in terms of cycles of aborted versus completed reforms—only provides a partial answer to the question of the origins of chavismo: it can explain the overwhelming demand across sectors for a change in politics, but it does not explain the actual change provided. Why did the solution that emerged in 1999 come in the form of a leftist-military alliance, as opposed to a social-market leftist government (à la Concertación in Chile), a moderate leftist-labor alliance (à la Lula in Brazil), a center-right alliance (à la Vicente Fox in Mexico), or a right-wing civilian-military alliance (à la Fujimori in Peru). We still need an explanation for the strength of the supply of the radical left and its ties to the military in Venezuela.

III. The incorporation of *SOF* since the 1960s

To understand the leftist-military alliance cobbled together by Chávez, it is necessary to revisit the story of how the Venezuelan radical left, a small and insubordinate actor in the 1960s, was integrated into the institutions of the Punto Fijo regime.

It's well known that the Punto Fijo regime's founding documents (both the set of pacts and the constitution of 1961) did little to include the Venezuelan radical left. This

occurred for two reasons. First, the radical left in the late 1950s and early 1960s was tiny (gathering less than 4 percent of the electorate) and thus had no bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the three larger parties (AD, Copei and the URD) (Corrales 2001). Second, at least one fundamental demand of the radical left was completely objectionable to each of the three larger parties. AD objected to the radical left's pro-Soviet/Cuban foreign policy; the opposition parties – Copei and the URD – objected to the radical left's call for centralization of power in the Executive; and all three parties objected to the radical left's call for banning the private sector. The resulting exclusion of the radical left prompted sectors of the radical left to turn violent, plunging Venezuela into an armed struggle that lasted until 1968.

However, after 1968, *SOFs* and the radical left were gradually incorporated. Unlike other Latin American countries, where the radical left was repressed, in Venezuela the radical left and the democratic state came to a tacit pact in the late 1960s, according to which the regime opened up opportunities of incorporation in return for the left's abandoning the armed struggle. Landmarks in the political incorporation of the radical left were the legalization of the Communist Party in 1969, a change in Venezuela's foreign policy under Caldera in favor of "reinserting" rather than excluding Cuba from the Inter-American community (Romero 2006), the legalization of Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria in 1973, and the founding of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) by former guerrilla leader Teodoro Petkoff in 1971 (a spinoff of the Communist Party). Even in the leading parties, leftist factions found homes. By 1973, for instance, COPEI was internally divided between a more centrist force (the so-called "Araguatos"), a left-leaning faction (the "Avanzados"), and an even more radical wing (the "Astronauts). President Luis Herrera Campíns came from the leftist Avanzado faction of COPEI (Ellner 2007:111, 124).

The combination of economic growth and government-sponsored institutional openings after the 1960s encouraged a shift in radical left attitudes in the 1970s from insurrection to integration-seeking (Ellner 1993:140-143). The MAS developed an official policy of “occasional support for AD and Copei,” intended to gain converts from those parties (Ellner 1986:93). Both the MAS and the PCV supported Pérez’s economic policies during his first administration. Leaders of the radical left even became players at the highest levels of politics in the Punto Fijo Republic: the number of presidential candidates doubled from 1968 to 1973, mostly with candidates from the left. Their presence in Congress increased. When Carlos Andrés Pérez faced charges of corruption, important leftist legislators (e.g., José Vicente Rangel, then from the PCV and eventually Chávez’s second hand in the mid 2000s) argued that the accusations were rightist-inspired reprisals for progressive policies (Ellner 2007:120). The MAS was the official ruling party under Caldera’s second term, and two of his closest economic officials, Teodoro Petkoff and Luis Raúl Matos Azócar were self-proclaimed “*hombres de izquierda*.”

In short, while Venezuela’s top political offices (e.g., the Presidency, management positions in state-owned enterprises, leadership positions in labor federations, seats in advisory boards to the president) remained off-limit to the radical left and reserved for the large parties (Coppedge 1994) and large interest groups (Crisp 2000), by the 1970s a growing number of secondary institutions became accessible. Small parties, small unions, small neighborhood associations, some media venues, some regions, and even the military had become institutional homes where radical leftist politicians and groups could function openly (Ellner 1993).

A. Universities

Another crucial Venezuelan institution that *SOFs* were able to populate was the university system. Institutions of higher education were direct offsprings of the Punto Fijo

regime and became one of the largest, most resource-endowed, anti-status quo ¹, and autonomous institutions in Venezuela, all courtesy of the Punto Fijo state.

A good indicator of the importance of this institution in the Punto Fijo era is the level of resources devoted to it. In the 1970s, Venezuela conducted one of the largest expansions in spending on higher education in the region (Figure 3). Between 1969 and 1974, public university enrollment expanded by a phenomenal 72 percent, compared to a 38 percent and a 23 percent expansion in secondary and primary education (Albornoz 1977). Between 1965 and 1998, tertiary education expanded almost fourfold whereas secondary education only doubled. Even in the economically-depressed mid 1990s, Venezuela still devoted 6.8 percent of its national budget to higher education—the highest in Latin America, whose average was 3.4 percent (de Moura Castro and Levy 2000). In the 1980s and 1990s, university education absorbed 38 percent of the budget of the Ministry of Education (World Bank 2001). Although total enrollment increased by 60 percent from 1986 to 1996 (*ibid*), total spending was still high relative to enrollment levels (see Figure 4). By the end of the 1990s, there were 144 institutions of higher learning, of which 41 were universities. Furthermore, abundant state subsidies made it so that most services in the university system were free or highly subsidized.²

The university system itself was organized in a way that made it easy for political groups to gain access. First, the university system did not have strict academic

¹ For an account of leftist (and right-wing) intellectuals at Venezuelan universities publishing attacks of the Punto Fijo regime prior to 1999, see Hillman (2004). Leftists at national universities were heavily divided between those who supported the small radical left (i.e., the so-called “organized left”) and independent leftists (see Ellner 1986:98).

² Food, for instance, is almost free; the cost of three meals for every weekday of the academic year was less than a dollar. Many of these subsidies were targeted to the middle classes: parking a car under a covered lot costs US\$1 per month, whereas the average for a similar parking garage elsewhere in Caracas was US\$1 for two hours (Albornoz, 2003:67).

requirements for faculty appointments. In the early 2000s, only 6.6 percent of faculty had Ph.D.s, compared to 19 percent in Brazil. Second, the pension system ensured that older professors could stick around. Although faculty could retire after only 25 years of service at a 100 percent salary, tax-free, many were then re-hired by either their own institutions or some other academic center. This allowed some “retired” faculty to collect both a salary and a pension. In 1999, almost 24 percent of the personnel at the universities was “retired” (Albornoz 2003:125). Third, at the student level, the universities did not impose restrictions on times in residence, so political activists could prolong their stay on campus beyond the average time it took to complete a degree. Of the students who enrolled at the university in 1989, only 40.5 percent graduated within five years (World Bank 2001).³

SOFs on the left took ample advantage of this institutional bigness, openness, and hospitality. Leftist activists, including former insurgents, gravitated toward the university system, as students or as faculty. In the UCV since the 1970s, the degree of representation of the radical left (PCV, MIR, URD, MEP, Bandera Roja) was greater than in the country at large. La Universidad del Zulia in Maracaibo and the University of Oriente, with campuses in Puerto La Cruz, Cumaná, and Ciudad Bolívar, originally bastions of AD, became dominated by MAS and Marxist radicals (see Hillman 2004:118-119). Few universities in Latin America with the exception of perhaps Mexico, Costa Rica, and Colombia enjoyed this privileged and autonomous status during much of the Cold War era.

B. The Military

By the 1980s, the military emerged, paradoxically, as yet another state-based institution that served as a haven for the radical left. After successfully demilitarizing

³ Another avenue culture-based avenue through which the left was subsidized was through the arts. Governments during the Punto Fijo regime devoted far more investments in the area “Culture, recreation and religion” (6 percent of total spending) than the rest of Latin America (less than 1 percent). López Obregón y Rodríguez). A significant portion of the culture budget went to artists and art groups associated with the left.

Venezuela and asserting civilian control over the military between the 1960s and the 1970s, the Punto Fijo regime made a turnaround and became instead a protector of a very well-taken-care-of military institution. The military got an agreeable mission (containment and defense against Colombia), autonomy in the conduct of security affairs, and healthy military budgets. Thus, the military provided ample opportunities for social mobility (Trinkunas 2005). The contrast in military spending between the 1960s and the 1980s reveals the extent to which the military as an institution was protected under the Punto Fijo system. After an initial contraction between 1967 and 1980 (military expenditures declined as a percentage of GDP, going from above to below the Latin American average, and as a percentage of central government expenditure (Figures 5 and 6), Venezuela's demilitarization trend was reversed. Military expenditure, both as a percentage of GDP and as a percentage of central government expenditure, expanded between 1980 and 1997. The size of the armed forces went from 49,000 in 1985 to 56,000 in 1998, a 14-percent increase (IISS 2000). Figures 5 and 6 show that the military remained a state-protected institution. Table 4 also shows the relative stability of Venezuela's military spending as percentage of central government expenditures over the three decades since the 1970s. In contrast, most Latin American countries (except Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Ecuador) experienced drastic fluctuations, mostly in a downward direction. The point is that, while other areas of government spending were being cut, the military remained relatively protected.

Despite this protection, by the 1990s, members of the military had a number of grievances that resonated with *SOF* anti-system ideologies--discontent with party-based military promotions, as well as resentment by junior officers of the higher income enjoyed by generals (Trinkunas 2002). One reason for this resentment had to do with the uneven distribution of resources within the military. Although Venezuela did not have a large military relative to its population (in terms of military expenditures per capita in 1996, Venezuela ranked 9 or 10 among 20 countries in the region) (Arcenaux 1999), by the

1990s, Venezuela had 103 brigadier generals and 30 generals; Brazil, with a five-times larger military, had only 116 generals (Hellinger 2003). It seems that most of the economic subsidies channeled to the military staff ended up in the hands of the upper echelons of the hierarchy, while low ranking staff suffered declining relative wages and conditions.

One way to gauge this is to examine the proportion of the military budget devoted to weapons acquisition. The average value of arms imports as a percentage of military expenditures expanded in the 1980s, from 11.1 percent between 1967 and 1979 to 38.5 percent between 1980 and 1989 (U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, various years). How much of this budget was diverted to corruption is a matter of speculation. But it seems safe to assume that very little went to junior officer and non-ranking troops. Inequality between the top officers and the rest was thus rising, and breeding discontent among junior ranks.

There is no question that there was no room at the top of the military for anti-establishment sentiment. Promotions required Senate approval, so high-ranking officers were necessarily subservient to the large parties. But throughout the rest of the military, soldiers enjoyed broader political autonomy. Furthermore, there are studies that show that the intelligence institutions of the military were not terribly repressive, neither across society nor within the military (Myers 2003), which would explain the ability of anti-status quo groups in the military to survive. This “complacency” seems to explain why Chávez’s faction within the military, the MBR-200, was allowed to operate unencumbered for almost 10 years prior to the 1992 coup (Ellner 2007:149). Venezuela’s intelligence institutions were designed in 1958 to avoid the abuses of the Pérez Jiménez administration and remained “fragmented,” lacking “horizontal linkages among its important institutions.” SECONSEDE (created in 1976), the only institution with the potential to coordinate Punto Fijo National Intelligence, remained on the sidelines (:88). In the 1980s, the focus on communist infiltration gave way to a focus on terrorism and drug enforcement.

Furthermore, there is evidence of underuse: DIM and DISIP warned CAP of contacts between radical civilian political leaders based in Caracas slums and alienated junior army officers; but CAP dismissed these reports. Caldera also did not use the reports.

The paradox of state-military affairs prior to Chávez is that the system was breeding anti-status quo sentiment in the military, even though that sector was relatively well treated by the state. As most military analysts argue, the discontent stemmed from both politics and economics. The military came to share the views of all intellectuals in Venezuela in the 1990s that the problem with the country was the stranglehold of the party system. The upper echelons resented party based promotions and the lower echelons resented *also* the rising economic inequality within the system. They felt that the leaner years of the 1990s were affecting them far more than was the case with top officers. The military thus became simultaneously a protégé and a victim of partyarchy. Because it was so well protected and simultaneously abused, the military acted both as a sponge for and a breeding ground of radical anti-status quo sentiment.

C. Subnational politics and voluntary organizations

After 1989, the other institutional arena that became open and hospitable to small opposition forces of the left was subnational political offices (Ellner 1993; Penfold 2002). A series of reforms, which included the remarkable 1989 decentralization reforms (which decentralized spending and allowed for the direct election of governors and mayors), the shortening of municipal and congressional terms, and the institution of nominal elections, was responsible for this institutional opening. By the late 1990s, the Venezuelan state was devoting a far larger sum of money (23 percent of total spending, or 5 percent of GDP) to its regions than the average Latin American country; most of this spending was earmarked for employment on the state and municipal levels (López Obregón and Rodríguez n.d.). The index of decentralization, which ranks LAC countries in terms of the ratio of

subnational expenditures to national expenditures, places Venezuela at the top 5 of 17 countries. This combination of political and economic decentralization represented a form of “diffusion of power” (Ellner 2003:14) that “lowered the cost of entry” for new actors (Levine 1998:198 in Canache, see also Crisp and Levine 1998:27 and 1999), “creating new actors and mobilizing new constituencies” (Navarro 2000:201). Some even referred to decentralization in the 1990s as a “semi-suicide” of traditional parties (Lalander 2006), which “undermined the fundamental pillars of the partidocratic model” (Buxton 2001:47).. One major group to profit from these opportunities was La Causa R, a grass-root, leftist political party that carried out a vigorous campaign among the unions and poorer neighborhoods (Canache 2004).

Institutional openness made available new avenues of political participation. By 1992, leaders of small opposition parties of the left held four state governorships and multiple mayoralties and were making headway in Congress (Figure 7). By 1993, leftist parties achieved control of the Executive branch (the Convergencia-MAS alliance) and the lower house. These small opposition forces, no longer that small, remained intensely divided on most policy and electoral issues, but united on one theme: their scorn for the *adecopeyanismo*, a sentiment now shared not just by the urban poor (Canache 2004), but also by economic elites, sectors of the military, and the bulk of intellectuals (Hillman 2004; Morgan 2007). The marginal left was not governing, but it was not homeless. By 1998, only 13 or 23 governorships were in the hands of the traditional parties, AD and Copei. Penfold (2002) thus concludes that the increase in gubernatorial electoral “opportunities” permitted both “emerging parties” (LCR, PV, and MBR-200) and established leftist parties (MAS) to become “important players” in Venezuelan politics in the 1990s.

The other form of mobilization was the rise of civil society. Studies trying to quantify the rise of civic associations suggest that the total number went from approximately 10,000 in the early 1990s to as many as 24,628 or perhaps even 54,266 by

the late 2000s (Salamanca 2004:100). As in the rest of Latin America (Hellman 1992), these groups tended to overrepresent the anti-party left. Some have argued that social movements were united along one cleavage (opposition to partyarchy) but divided along a socioeconomic cleavage: popular sector movements defended a more radical democracy emphasizing social justice while movements from upper classes emphasized more liberal democracy and private property (García-Guadilla 2005). Either way, the combined pressure of this expansion of civiness led to a “deepening of democracy” in the 1980s-1990s (ibid.:113).

In short, the political position of *SOFs*, including the radical left, improved, even though (or perhaps because) the regime was collapsing economically. As the number of impoverished low-income groups and defectors from traditional parties increased, the political opportunities for small opposition parties and radical left parties increased. By 1992, this combination of economic shrinking *and* political opening led to the decline of traditional parties, AD and Copei, in favor of new or previously blocked parties: Convergencia, MAS, the PCV, Causa-R and later, in 1998, the MVR. Institutional opening rather than (or together with) institutional decay, is thus the most powerful explanation for regime change in the direction of leftist-militarism.

IV. The Non-adaptation of parties, including the radical left

I provided an institutional explanation for the prospering of the *left* in Venezuela, but what about the endurance of *radicalism* in Venezuela? While not everyone in Venezuela’s large left was radical, the radicals were not a tiny minority. More precisely, it seems that there was a large section of the left that, while embracing up-to-date ideas of democracy such as the need for more participatory mechanisms, was nonetheless still clamoring for ideas that are more aptly described as “setentistas,” even “cincuentistas,” (e.g., “endogenous development,” the chavista term of import-substitution

industrialization, tolerance for concentration of power in the hands of the Executive, and admiration for military careers). Most of the left in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s moved in the direction of greater acceptance of private market forces and definite rejection of concentration of power in the hands of the Executive or military (Angell 1996, Castañeda 1993). The Venezuelan left, in contrast, continued to romanticize revolutionary politics—a strategy that in the 1990s generated problems for leftist parties elsewhere, either at the moment of elections or when governing (Roberts 1998). Even the MAS, the most self-democratizing party of the left, when it became the ruling party, rejected its very own planning minister, Teodoro Petkoff, for “selling his soul to” neoliberalism. What explains the ideological non-adaptation of so many sectors of the Venezuelan left (see Katz and Mair 1994; Burgess and Levitsky 2003)?⁴

A. One-Way Globalization

Part of the reason for the non-evolution of a significant sector of Venezuela’s left is what I would describe as “one-way globalization.” The left was exposed to international currents, but these were mostly inwardly rather than outwardly-flowing, and this biased the sector’s ideological evolution. A comparison with the international experience of other Latin American leftists makes this point clear.

Most Latin American leaders of the left abandoned their countries in the 1960s-70s period, fleeing right-wing dictatorships. The majority went to the United States, Canada, and Europe. This international contact contributed to the ideological moderation of the Latin American left, in tandem with the moderation of the left in the West (for how this process operated in Chile, see Angell 2001). Even those Latin American leftists who

⁴ Burgess and Levitsky (2003:883), following Katz and Mair (1994), define party adaptation as “changes in strategy and/or structure, undertaken in response to changing environmental conditions that improve a party’s capacity to gain or maintain electoral office.” An important component of party adaptation is changes in platforms, affiliates, and coalition partners, to reflect new economic realities.

sought asylum in communist Eastern Europe underwent moderation, as they became disenchanted with Marxism in practice. In the words of Hagopian (2005:323), exile “tamed their passions” for socialism. As these exiles returned to their countries starting in the early 1980s, they served as carriers of the new, more moderate left-wing ideology that they adopted while abroad. A good example was Ricardo Lagos, president of Chile from 2000 to 2006. Lagos was a hard-core, leftist supporter of Salvador Allende’s government in the 1970s who was about to be confirmed as Chile’s ambassador to the Soviet Union when Pinochet carried out his coup in 1973. He sought asylum in Argentina, and then in the United States, where he taught economics at the University of North Carolina. Upon his return, Lagos became a main advocate of the Concertación’s more moderate stands, serving first as education minister and then as infrastructure minister (Navia 2006).

The Lagos style of ideological adaptation was rare in Venezuela because leftists had few political reasons to leave Venezuela involuntarily. Institutional comfort at home precluded exodus, which in turn, precluded international exposure, which in part, precluded ideological adaptation.

If anything, the Venezuelan radical left interacted mostly with its own kind. As Table 5 shows, Venezuela experienced a massive inflow of exiles from the Southern Cone between 1960 and 1981. In addition to the United States, Canada and Europe, South American leftist leaders in the 1960s migrated to Venezuela and Mexico because these countries remained free of anti-communist dictatorships and institutionally open. Venezuela in particular offered generous legal opportunities for Southern Cone refugees. For instance, starting with President Caldera in 1973, and throughout the duration of the Pinochet regime in Chile, the Venezuelan government actively provided political asylum to Chileans, including the establishment of special funds for refugees (Yáñez 2004). Consequently, the combined population of Argentine, Chilean and Uruguayan nationals in Venezuela increased by almost 800 percent between 1961 and 1981. There is also evidence

that that these exiles became quite assimilated into Venezuelan society. Most of them were professional, and 42.5 percent of them held jobs, mostly in professional fields. As further proof that these Southern Cone immigrants in Venezuela were mostly political in kind (leaving for political rather than economic reasons), immigration from Argentina and Uruguay turned negative in the 1980-84 precisely when these dictatorships expired.

In short, the Venezuelan left in the 1960s-1980s period was peculiar relative to the rest of Latin America (except in Mexico) in that it remained at home and hosted exiled leftists. This one-way globalization reinforced rather than challenged group-think, and is a key reason for the survival of ideas that leftists elsewhere in Latin American considered outmoded by the 1990s.

B. The Parties' Technocratic Deficit

Not just the left, but also Venezuela's traditional parties suffered their own case of non-adaptation. Elsewhere in Latin American, most postwar parties that became electorally successful in the 1990s (e.g., the Peronists in Argentina, the PRI in Mexico, the Colorados in Uruguay, the Christian Democrats and Socialists in Chile, the Liberals in Colombia) did so after undergoing a process of internal renovation. One crucial component of that renovation was the incorporation of more *técnicos* within their ranks. These *técnicos* updated their party's ideologies, and more importantly, gave them policy tools to deal with the crisis of the 1980s. This did not happen with AD and COPEI, which remained fairly closed to technical expertise.

The best study on the relationship between Venezuelan parties and *técnicos*, grouped into "*colegios*" (or professional associations and boards), indicates that parties and *colegios* always had a strong working relationship, which is not surprising for a democracy, especially one with a large, rent-granting public sector (Martz and Myers 1994; see also Crisp 2000). Until the 1970s, professionals felt that they played an important part "in

creating and consolidating” Venezuelan democracy and influencing politicians (Martz and Myers 2004:21). However, over time, this relationship eroded and they started to feel that it was politicians that “influence the colegios,” a clear change in the direction of influence that led to resentment by professionals toward parties.

The disintegrating connections between party factions and *colegios* is only one side of the technocratic crisis, not the whole story. If one looks at the ways in which técnicos, or technical expertise for that matter, entered party leadership, rather than merely the working relationship between the groups, the disconnect appears even larger.

There are two ways in which technical knowledge can penetrate parties, neither of which worked well in Venezuela after the 1970s. The first is entrance through the Executive Branch, a model exemplified by Mexico under PRI rule. Mexican presidents since the 1960s appointed technical experts throughout the federal bureaucracy, and these técnicos joined the ruling party leadership, and even made it to the presidency. In Venezuela this process of técnico-incorporation was never all that strong—top party positions remained in the hands of traditional politicians—and it completely collapsed under Pérez (1989-2003), with AD’s famous campaign against Pérez’s technical cabinet (Corrales 2002).

The other entry route for technical expertise is through specialized service in the legislature: the more time a legislator spends in the legislature, the greater incentive he or she has to develop technical expertise (Jones, Saiegh, Spiller and Tomassi 2002). In Venezuela, the average tenure of legislators was very low: 64.6 percent of legislators served only one term; 15.3 percent served only two terms, as evidenced in Figure 8 (see also Monaldi, González, Obuchi and Penfold 2005). Legislators’ reelection rate was one of the lowest in the region (IDB 2005:Chapter 3). In addition, the productivity of the legislature, measured in terms of number of bills approved per year, was shockingly low. At the end of the 1990s, with financial support from the Inter-American Bank, a major initiative was

launched to bolster the technical expertise of the legislature with the creation of an office of technical advice for exclusive use by the legislature. But this office was effectively undermined by Chávez by 2001. In short, prior to 1999, Venezuelan legislators lasted little in their posts and the legislature produced little, all of which lessened incentives for professional party-based politicians to acquire expertise.

In sum, Venezuelan traditional parties suffered from what Hagopian (2005:359) argues are two major causes of party crisis: a representational deficit (i.e., a disconnect between party leadership and civil society) and a technical-expertise deficit (a disconnect with policy-wonks). The representational deficit engendered party defections by both the “new right” and “new left” (see Molina 2000; Morgan 2007; Myers 2007) who felt unrepresented by ideologically-paralyzed party leadership. The social-democratic party and Christian Democratic remained attached to the old rentier-populist model, which was increasingly unappealing to the new right; and the MAS was too attached to anti-capitalism, which was unappealing to the new left. At the same time, the technical-expertise deficit deprived parties of ideas, made them hesitant to experiment, and led to unimaginative responses to economic crises. This technical-expertise deficit has not been emphasized enough by scholars, and yet it was perhaps as serious, and maybe even a cause of, the representational deficit that ended up decimating Venezuela’s traditional parties.

V. Venezuela and Latin American Countries Compared circa 1998

I have argued that sociological explanations for the rise of Chávez which emphasize the population’s unaddressed economic needs and widespread desire for change in the 1990s are insufficient to understand the political coalition built by Chávez. At best, these theories account for only the demand side, not the supply side: they cannot explain easily the availability of such a large pool of radical leftist civilians and nationalist military willing

to collaborate to form a government since 1999.

Table 6 summarizes the key factors that I have argued led to a strong radical left sector across civil society and the military:

1) Feeding Mechanisms: pro immigration policies in the 1960s and 1970s, rare cases of exodus, two decades of economic contraction in the 1980s and 1990s and aborted reforms in the 1990s, inequalities between junior and senior officers in the military; and

2) Institutional Protections: legalization of the Left in the 1970s, the university and the military's protected budget, devoid of right-wing purges, mobilizational opportunities (decentralization of political office and the military's openness).

Together with the erosion of traditional parties in the 1990s, which further lowered barriers to entry of new political groups, these factors created conditions for the rise of radical leftism in Venezuela by the late 1990s.

Table 6 also shows that these conditions were not replicated to the same extent elsewhere in the region. For example, very few Latin American university systems in the 1960s and 1970s were as well funded and as politically free as Venezuela's. The discrepancy in these conditions explains why elsewhere in the region, the radical left was not as large, radical, or willing to accept military involvement in politics as it was in Venezuela. If Chávez had tried to build a coalition of radical leftists and left-leaning military officers in another Latin America country in the late 1990s, he would not have been as successful.

Analysts conventionally divide the political spectrum in most countries into four broad categories: extreme left, center left, center right, and extreme right. Venezuela in the in 1998 was no exception. The exceptionality was that proportion of voters and leaders within each category differed in significant ways from the rest of Latin America.

Specifically:

1) The size of the right was not that large in Venezuela. The two forces that fed

the right in Latin America were not strong in Venezuela--1) a Cold War-influenced military-fighting insurgency all the way through the early 1980s; and 2) neoliberalism in the 1990s, which would have given rise to large pro-market political forces. The best evidence for the weakness of the right was the minimal share of the vote obtained by the two candidates of the right in the 1998 presidential elections, Miguel Rodríguez and Irene Saénz: 3.12 percent.

2) Within the Venezuelan left, the extreme left was strong and becoming stronger. Institutions sheltering and promoting radical thought were well protected from adjustment and were expanding as a result of decentralization and the collapse of traditional parties.

Three groups were trying to rise against the rentier-model defended by parties in Venezuela—the radical left since the 1970s, and the new left and the new right in the 1990s. But the radical left enjoyed the most institutional opportunities. They had a strong presence over the university, the military, social movements, and increasingly, the new political parties that were displacing the traditional parties. The radical left was thus best positioned to take advantage of the “unraveling” of the Punto Fijo regime. By 1993, Venezuela faced an array of propitious conditions for an assault against the traditional political actors of the regime: almost 20 years of continuous economic decline, divisions within the traditional parties (which stayed impermeable to technical experts and plagued by voter detachment), and nonmodernized small opposition forces that were enjoying new allies and safe political spaces. Hugo Chávez emerged as the leader of such an assault. His task was to unite the radicals at the university, the suffering low-income groups, and the military.

The paradox of the origins of chavismo is that it is a movement of anti-status quo personalities that emerged because these forces experienced, not institutional exclusion, but

rather, institutional protection. The rise of Chávez in 1998 thus represents not the sudden triumph of historically excluded groups, but rather, the culmination of years in which malcontents were able to use the institutions of democracy to climb to the top. More than revolution, it was ladder-climbing.

VI. Chavismo in Office: Coalition Toolkits

This section discusses the different instruments that Chávez has used overtime to keep this radical-leftist coalition together. The first element is radicalism. Other than its anti-party stance, the Chávez administration at first was not all that radical. At the level of economics, Chávez hardly proposed any major policy departures (at least not more than Caldera during his honeymoon). But starting in 2001, he began to take increasingly radical stands in economics and politics. Since then, the Chávez regime has competed in each electoral process (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009) on a platform and a record that was far more radical than in the previous electoral contest.

There are two schools of thought on the possible origin of radicalization. One school suggests that radicalization is a response to the intransigence of the status quo. The state tries to introduce structural reforms, usually in the form of distributive politics, only to confront the veto power of certain class interests. This argument is famously associated with Karl Marx, for whom revolution (rather than reform) is the only realistic path to true change, but it has also been accepted by contemporary non-Marxists. For instance, William Easterly (2001) and Acemoglu and Robinson (2006:321-322) argue that development produces a stalemate between elites who fear redistribution and the masses who, mobilized by democracy, demand redistribution. In these accounts, radicalization is a consequence of unbending structures.

An alternative view of radicalization is to see it as a deliberate, and not necessarily inevitable, policy of the state. Radicalization does not occur because change necessitates it but because state elites, more so than the masses, prefer it due to its potential electoral rewards (Cohen 1994; Bermeo 2003). In Corrales (Forthcoming), I demonstrate how this electoral reward can happen. Essentially, radicalization caters to the most radical of government's supporters while simultaneously splitting the least-ideologized sectors (i.e., the uncommitted voters or those in the ideological center) into at least three groups: moderate supporters of the government, ambivalent groups, and opponents. Depending on the ideological distribution, this societal response to radicalism can generate winning majorities for incumbents.

Yet, radicalization can be politically risky. While it can increase the number of supporters, it yields a new group—the ambivalent groups. These are groups of voters who do not identify openly with either pole. Ambivalent voters are risky for the government. These groups can be large and electorally decisive. Insofar as their loyalties remain in flux, ambivalent voters can at any point gravitate toward the opposition since, by definition, they have non-fixed loyalties.

Most polls provide evidence of the rise of ambivalent groups soon after Chávez begins to radicalize in office. By July 2001, for example, one reputable poll was already beginning to classify some Venezuelan voters as “repented chavistas” (Gil Yepes 2004). The size of repented chavistas swelled from 8.9 percent in February 2001 to 14.7 percent in July 2001 and 32.8 percent in December 2001 (ibid.). By June 2002, these repented chavistas turned into “light chavistas,” “light anti-chavistas,” and “hard anti-chavistas,” confirming the hypothesis that radicalization results in a loss of moderate support for the incumbent, and that these losses could easily turn anti-incumbent. In addition, defections in the military and in the cabinet increased. By mid 2002, the government found itself confronting the largest amount of opposition since coming to office.

The key point is that even in situations of polarization, the size of the swing group grows to non-trivial levels. Thus, even radical leftist governments need to develop strategies to deal with ambivalent groups.

What has the Chávez administration done to address ambivalent groups? This is where the three other elements of the coalition toolkit come into place: clientelism, impunity, and job discrimination (this section draws from Corrales and Penfold (2007)).

Clientelism refers to the distribution of state resources from a strong political actor (in this case, the state) to a less powerful actor (in this case, ordinary citizens and small civil society organizations). In the context of a radical-leftist government, clientelism is likely to work mostly among the less ideological sectors of the population: the extreme left does not need clientelism to support a radical-leftist government, and the extreme right won't be swayed by it either. Clientelism's only hope is thus with the non-ideologized sectors.

The other strategy that Chávez has deployed is cronyism, which differs from clientelism in that benefits pass from strong actors to other strong actors (e.g., the military, business groups, financial sectors). Like clientelism, cronyism is also a policy targeted toward the non-ideologized sectors, especially elites. Because strong actors can act as major veto groups, not just of policy but also of the administration tenure in office, it is important for governments in unstable political settings to deploy significant resources to deal with powerful actors. One of the key reasons that corruption is so rampant (or why Chávez does little to contain corruption) is precisely because of the need to keep certain groups from defecting, and as many elites as possible from siding with the opposition.

The final strategy deployed by the Chávez administration to deal with ambivalent groups is job discrimination. The Chávez administration, in no uncertain terms, has repeated that the largest benefits of his administration (government jobs, government contracts, government subsidies, etc.) are reserved for supporters, which the government in 2006 called the "*rojo, rojitos*" (the red ones, very red ones). The Chávez administration thus

likes to portray itself as a watchful government that rewards supporters and punishes opponents through exclusion from clientelism, corruption and government jobs. This is meant to convey that there are large gains from staying loyal and large losses from dissenting. Again, this is a strategy that affects mostly the non-ideologized, ambivalent groups. It is also a strategy intended to promote electoral absenteeism on the party of anti-chavistas. And more fundamentally, it is also a strategy that has been intensely applied to the military through purges of non-loyal officers.

In sum, the administration offers clientelism, cronyism or impunity, and job discrimination to keep the ambivalent voters from totally switching to the other side or capturing key institutions of the state. These policies increase the number of supporters beyond that which the extreme left bloc provides.

Consequently, the coalition of leaders and voters who support Chávez is different from what it was in the beginning. It is revolutionary, but also conservative in that it is keen on preserving newly gained state sinecures. Chávez's supporters by 2009 included not just extreme left, but also new and old winners: welfare recipients, actors with ties to the state and those who profit from corruption. Although these winners come from different income groups (welfare recipients are mostly poor, state employees come from the low middle classes, and corrupt folks are wealthier), they share the same electoral objective—to preserve their gains. These gains are access to social programs, state jobs and contracts, and impunity. What unites these groups is a fear that the opposition will take away their gains.

We can now understand why the Chávez administration relies on radicalism *and* intense clientelism/impunity/discrimination. The former maximizes the number of supporters relative to defectors (due to the large, albeit non-majoritarian, status of the extreme left), but it also increases the number of ambivalent groups. The latter policies target ambivalent groups. Combined, both sets of policies give rise to winning coalitions

that, paradoxically, include an odd combo: committed revolutionaries and less-ideologized, state-dependent actors, many of whom are social elites.

VIII. Conclusion

The chavismo phenomenon, both its rise and consolidation in power, cannot be explained without invoking both demand- and supply-side explanations. A focus on the demand side (which stresses widespread discontent in the late 1990s) can explain why a majority of voters would support political change in the late 1990s, but it cannot explain why the leftist alternative that prevailed proved to be so radical, so compatible with the military, and so reliant on clientelism, impunity, and intimidation. In deciding to form a radical-military government, Chávez could count on a larger pool of voters and political leaders willing to construct this project. Venezuela's democratic institutions—universities, the military, local governments, and small parties—served to incubate and insulate these groups. Incubation helps explain their phenomenal growth since the 1970s; insulation explains their lack of ideological adaptation in tandem with the mainstream international democratic left.

This analysis has implications for several key debates in comparative politics of Latin America: 1) the rise of the left in in the 2000s, 2) regime evolution in general, 3) ideological adaptation of parties; and 4) the supply-side of extremism rather than moderation.

First, on the rise of the left in Latin America, this paper argued that this phenomenon is driven mostly by both gripe and institutional facilities, rather than mostly by institutional exclusion. The radical left in Venezuela, as elsewhere in Latin America, had strong grievances against the status quo, and these grievances intensified as inequality rose in the 1980s and as market reforms failed to deliver in the 1990s. Yet, it is important to

understand the extent of institutional protection in Venezuela. Whereas in the rest of the region the radical left was severely repressed, imprisoned or exiled in 1960s-1980s, in Venezuela democratic institutions since 1968 offered protections, opportunities for integration and shelter, and ultimately, access to state office in the 1990s. These institutions not only subsidized the left, but also insulated them from exposures to global forces that would have triggered ideological evolution.

Second, on the question of regime change and democratization, this paper highlighted a process that seems to defy Acemoglu and Robinson's (2006) theory that democratization occurs when non-elites maximize both their *de jure* and *de facto* power vis-a-vis the state. In Venezuela, the radical left obtained a substantial "reparations" package, not when it was strong and threatening, but rather when it was at its weakest—i.e., when it was politically and militarily defeated in the late 1960s.

Third, on the notion of party adaptation, this paper emphasized the notion of one-way globalization and exclusion of technical expertise. Immigration of like-minded cohorts surpassed emigration rates, creating a relatively insular and self-reinforcing idea-pool in Venezuela. Economists are used to differentiating the effects of inward versus outward economic influences in a given country. This paper suggests that, in terms of political ideas, this dichotomy is relevant as well. The Venezuelan left's one-way globalization limited adaptation of large segments of the left. In addition, party adaptation was hindered by the enormous barriers that parties erected against the incorporation of technical expertise. In Venezuela, these barriers existed because of the low level of circulation of party leadership and the parties' low levels of investments in legislative affairs.

And finally, this paper offered an explanation for radicalism that combines both the supply side with the inherent logic of radicalism in generating loyalties based on asymmetries in the distribution of voters along the ideological spectrum. Majority pressures per se did not necessarily push Chávez to turn radical once in office. This desire

to become more radical was instead the result of: the personal preferences of Chávez, the large dominance of radical leaders who surrounded and cheered him, and the good supply of military officers willing to tolerate, even sympathize with this project. This supply-side explanation for radicalism must also be supplemented with an understanding of the political logic of pursuing extremism in politics. Radicalism has a clear political payoff in situations in which the radical left is large. But radicalization also carries the risk of enlarging ambivalent groups. Deploying supplementary policies to coopt these groups is indispensable. Chávez's supplements his radical policies with reactionary policies such as clientelism, impunity and intimidation, to pander everyone the least-ideologized sectors. .

Thus, to focus exclusively on the demand side to explain the combination of radical-military politics and corruption/impunity/intimidation is insufficient. Radical-military policies represent a break from the status quo, while corruption/impunity/intimidation represents an accentuation of, rather than a break from, the pre-Chávez status quo. The same demand force could not possibly explain the rise of such dissimilar outcomes. Combining demand side argument with supply-side explanations, and invoking the logic of extremism, helps explain the odd combination of radicalism and conservatism that is at the core of chavismo.

Table 1: Military Officers (active and retired) in Public Office, Venezuela circa 2005		
	Circa 2005	Mid 2008
Governors	9	8
Deputies	8	NA
Ministers	6	9*
Viceministers	3	NA
Directorships within ministries	16	NA
Directorships of Autonomous Institutes	15	NA
*Includes Vicepresident		
Source: <i>El Nacional</i> /Súmate.		

Table 2: Professional Profile of Delegates to the 1999 Constituent Assembly

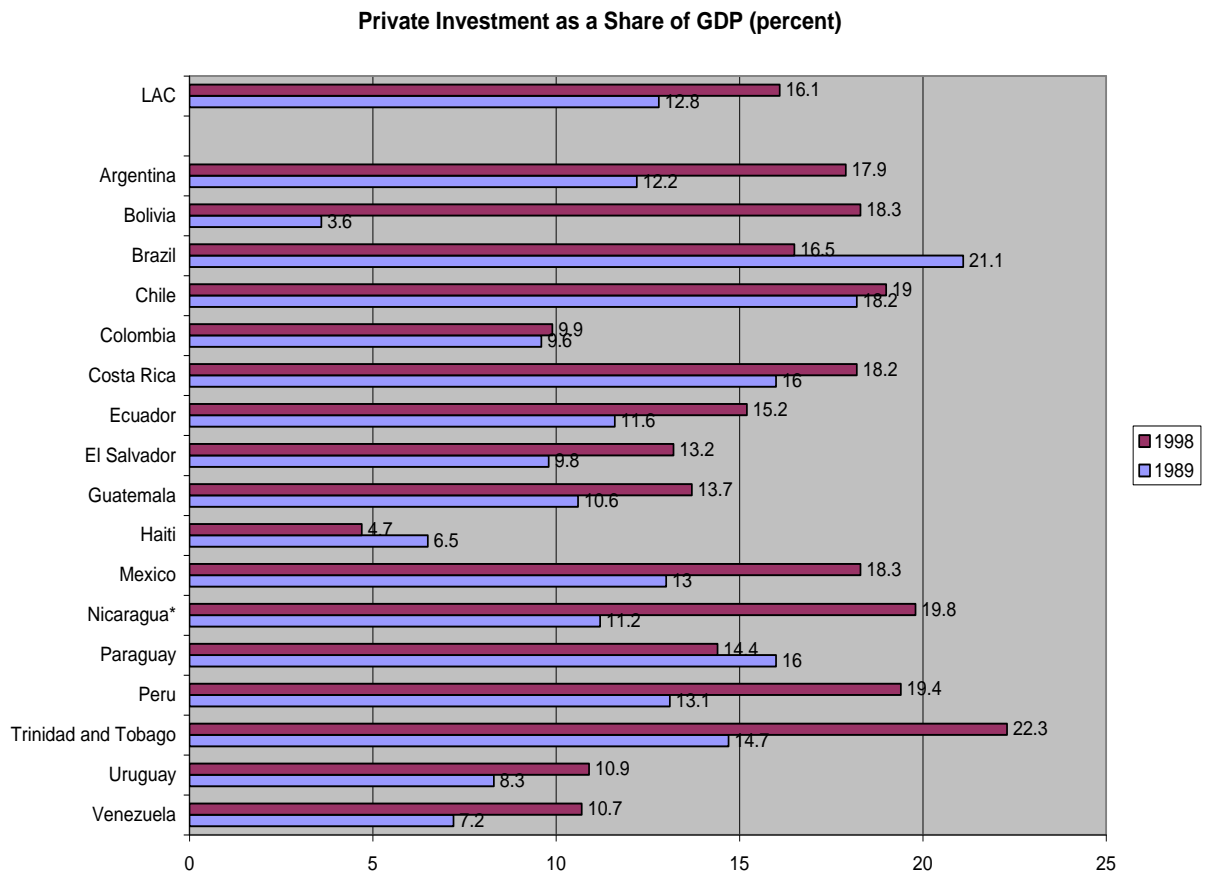
	No.	Pro-I	O Forces		Indigenous	
		%	No.	%	No.	%
Political Activist (total)	57	46.72	4	66.67	2	66.67
Lawyer	10	8.20	2	33.33		
Economist	0	0.00	1	16.67		
Labor Leader	3	2.46				
Misc	23	18.85	1	16.67	1	33.33
Professor	16	13.11				
Teacher	1	0.82			1	33.33
Labor Leader	1	0.82				
Former Guerrillas	3	2.46				
Professors	24	19.67	1	16.67	0	0.00
Economics	1	0.82				
Other	22	18.03	1	16.67		
Chávez's brother	1	0.82				
Civilian Professionals	21	17.21	1	16.67	1	33.33
Lawyers	2	1.64			1	33.33
Singers	1	0.82				
Business	1	0.82				
Economists	1	0.82				
Medical Doctors	3	2.46				
Sociologists	3	2.46				
Others	9	7.38	1	16.67		
Chávez's wife	1	0.82				
Military	19	15.57	0	0.00	0	0.00
Military in the 1960s	1	0.82				
Military in the 1990s	2	1.64				
“ who participated in 1992 coup attempts	9	7.38				
Active	5	4.10				
Retired	2	1.64				
NC	1	0.82				
Total	122		6		3	

Source: Author based on on-line searches of Venezuela's dailies.

Table 3: Gross Fixed Investment Rates, Venezuela 1960-1998 (annual average as percent of GDP)			
	Total	Public	Private
1960-70	24.2	8.4	15.8
1970-80	34.4	10.8	23.6
1980-90	21.3	10.6	10.7
1990-98	15.8	9.9	6.9

Source: DiJohn (2004).

Figure 1



Source: Everhart and Sumlinski (2001).

Figure 2

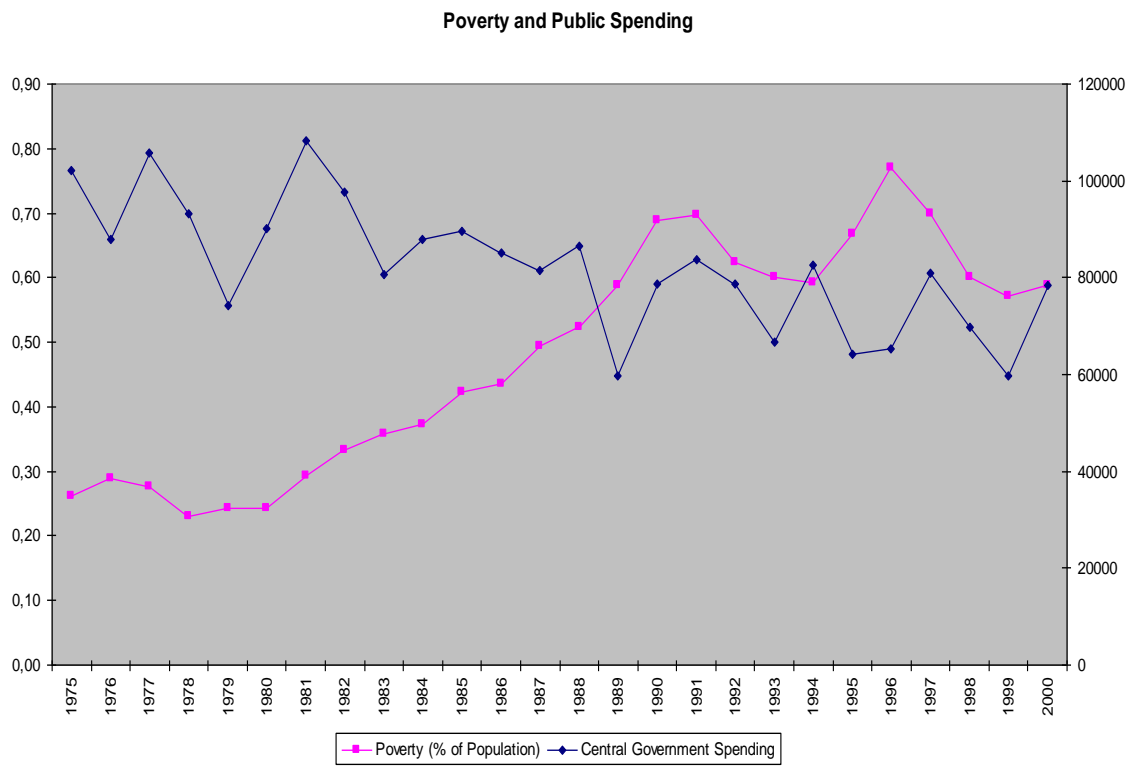
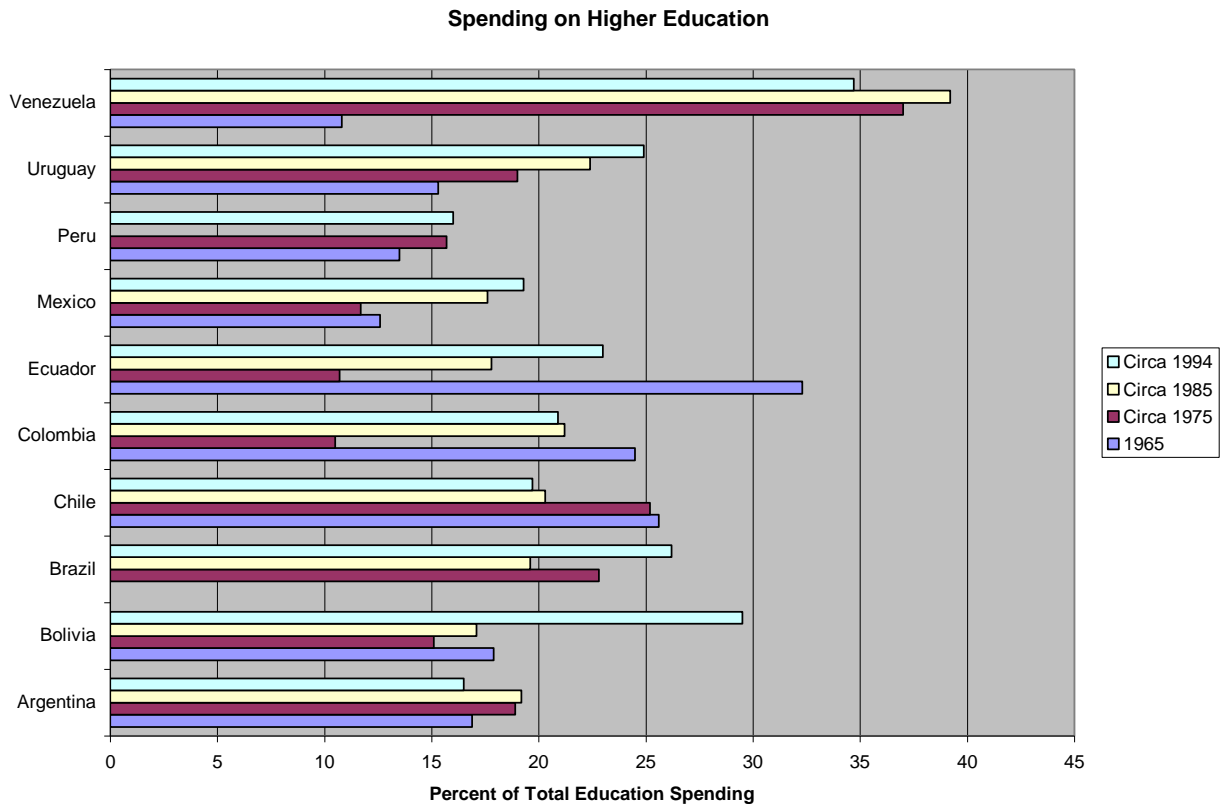
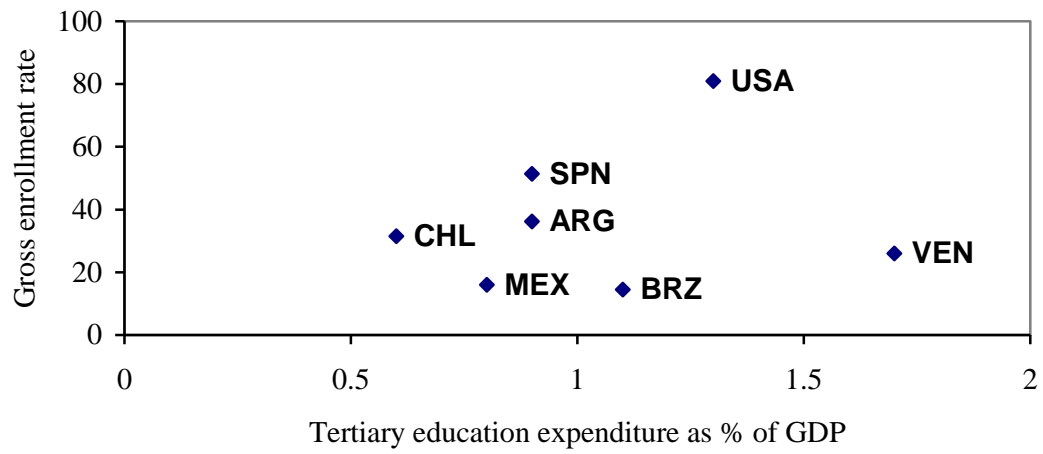


Figure 3



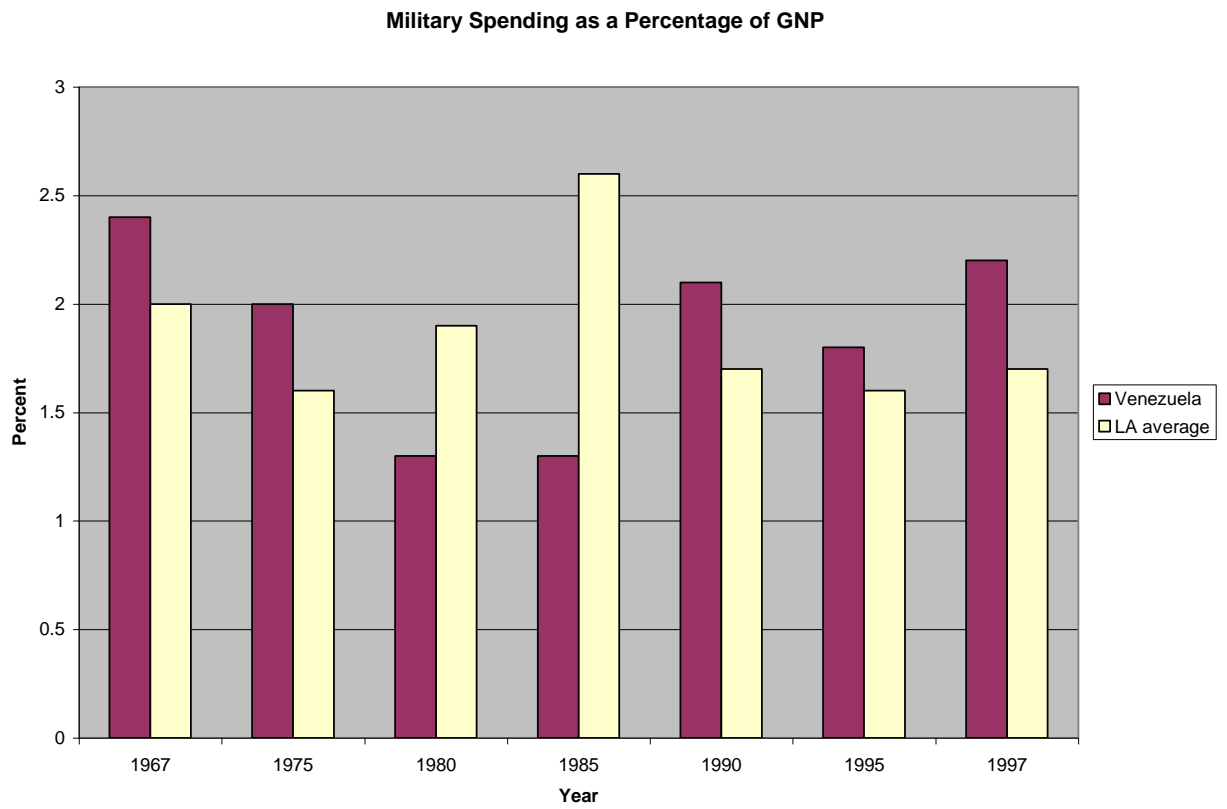
Source: UNESCO (various years).

Figure 4: Tertiary Spending and Enrollments, Selected Countries



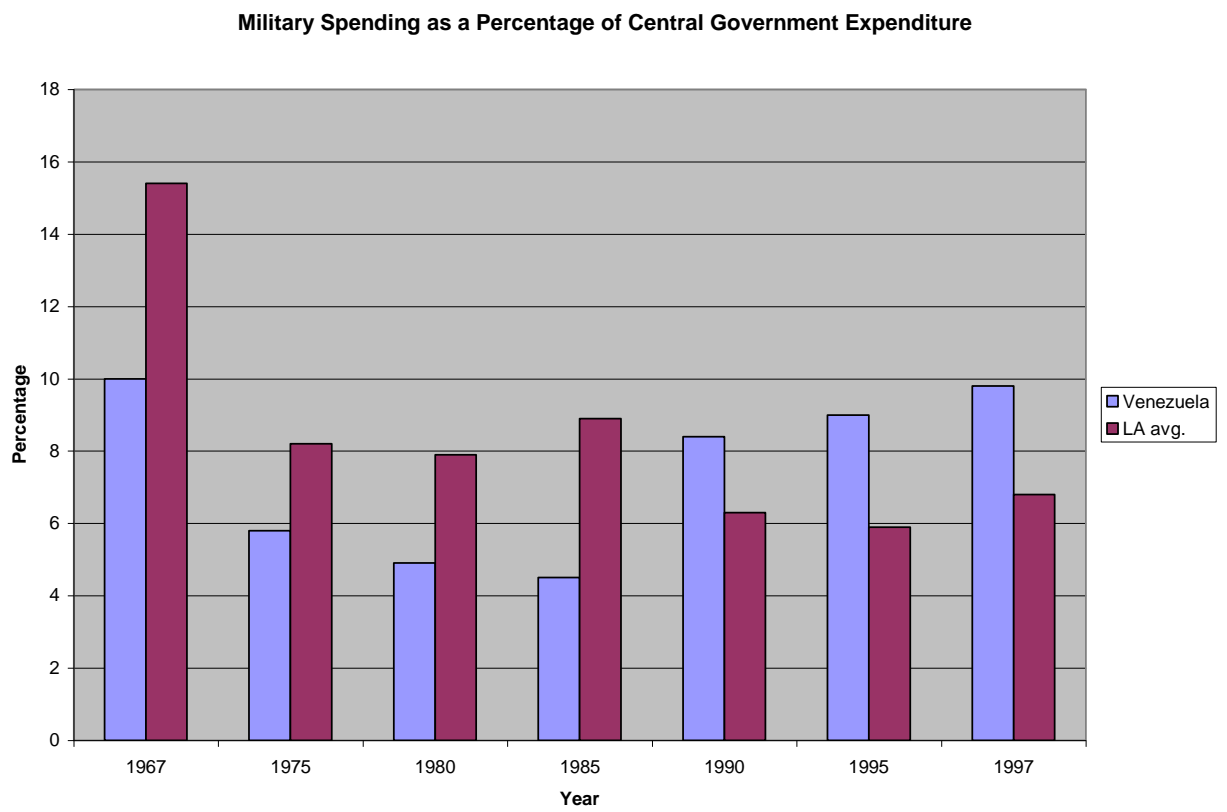
Source: World Bank and UNESCO.

Figure 5



Source: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (various years).

Figure 6



Source: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (various years).

Table 4: Military Expenditure as a Percentage of Central Government Spending, annual averages by decades, 1970-1999

	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999
Latin America	12.8	7.6	6.5
Argentina	12.8	17	11.7
Bolivia	11.5	22.4	10.7
Brazil	14.5	3.4	4.1
Chile	12	12.9	14.8
Colombia	11.3	10.3	17.8
Ecuador	15.3	14	20.7
Mexico	5.1	2.2	3.9
Peru	23.2	33.3	11.5
Venezuela	7.6	7.1	6.6

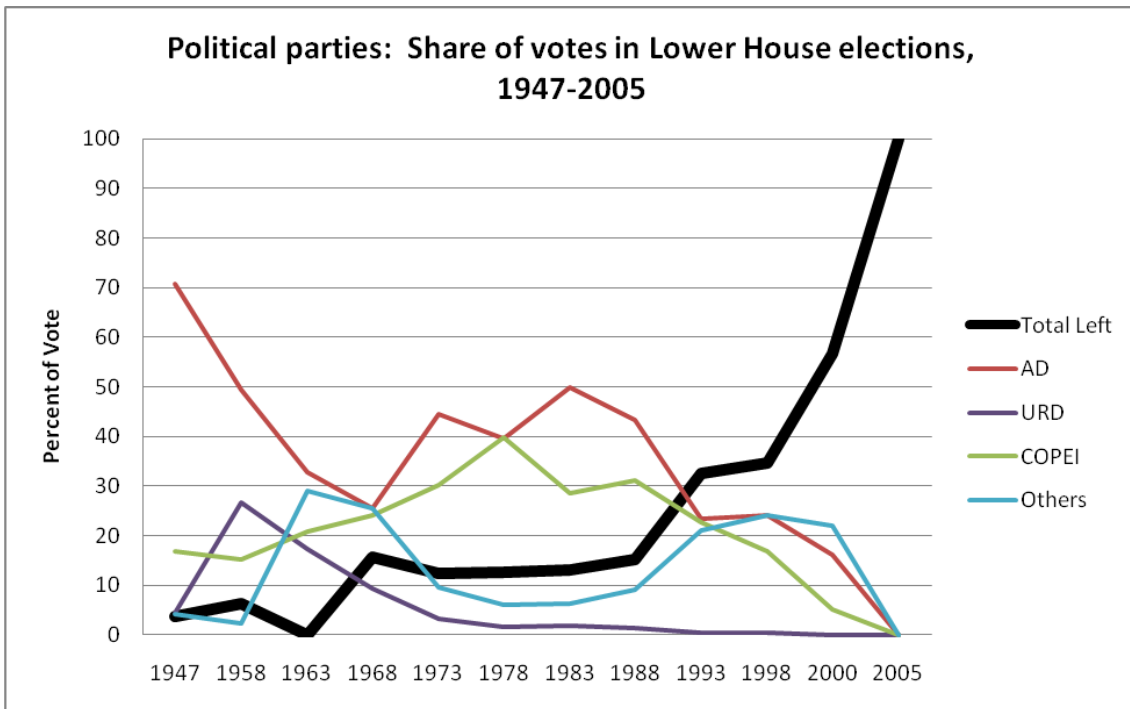
Source: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (various years).

Table 5: Immigration to Venezuela, 1961-1981

	1961	1971	1981	Percent Increase 1961-81
Total	541,563	596,455	1,074,629	198.43
Arg + Chi + Uru	5,531	8,086	43,748	790.96
Colombia	102,314	180,144	508,166	496.67
Europe	369,298	329,850	349,117	-5.46
Other	64,420	78,375	173,598	269.48

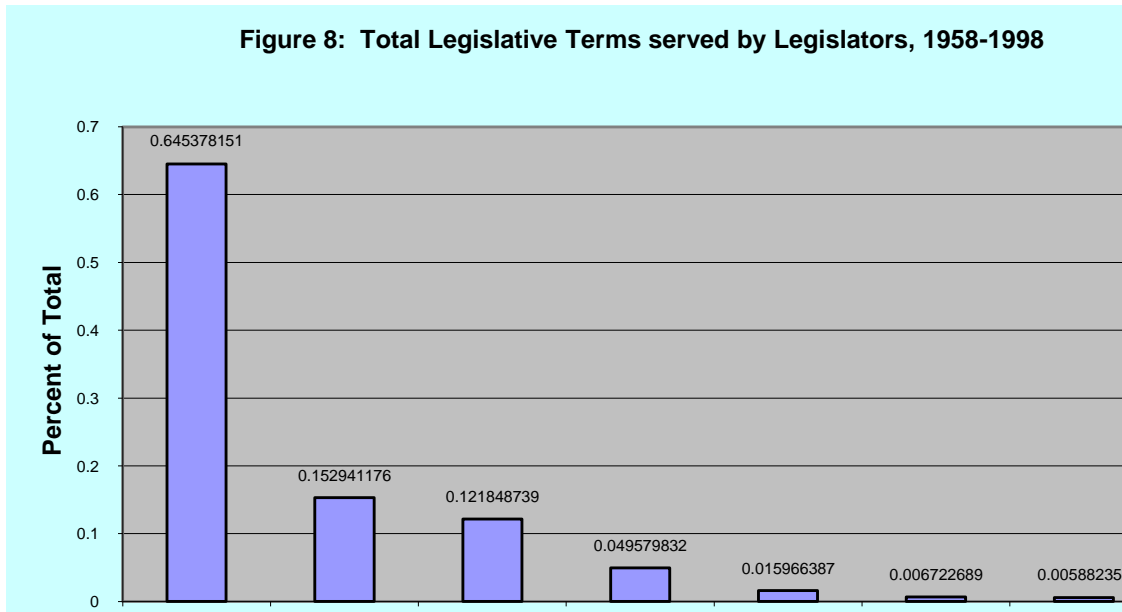
Source: Bidegain (1986)

Figure 7



Note: "Total Left" includes the following parties. For 1947: PCV (Partido Comunista de Venezuela); 1958: PCV; 1968: PCV, MEP (Movimiento Electoral del Pueblo); 1973: PCV, MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria), MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo), MEP; 1978: PCV, VUC (Vanguardia Unida Comunista), MIR, MAS, MEP; 1983: PCV, NA (Nueva Alternativa), LCR (La Causa R), LS (Liga Socialista), MIR, MAS, MEP; 1988: PCV, LCR, LS, MAS, MEP; 1993: PCV, LCR, MAS, MEP; 1998: PCV, PPT (Patria Para Todos), MVR (Movimiento Quinta República), LCR, MAS, MEP; 2000: PCV, PPT, MVR, LCR, MAS, MEP; 2005: MVR.

Source: Based on Alvarez (2006, Table 1, p. 21).



Source: Based on data published by Gaceta Oficial (various years).

Table 6: Venezuela on the Eve of Chavismo Compared (circa 1998)

	<i>Ven</i>	<i>Arg</i>	<i>Bol</i>	<i>Bra</i>	<i>Chi</i>	<i>Col</i>	<i>Ecu</i>	<i>Mex</i>	<i>Nic</i>	<i>Per</i>
<i>Institutional sheltering of the Radical Left</i>										
Legalization of the left, 1970s	Yes							Yes		
Large, open universities (i.e., purges were rare), 1960s-80s	Yes					Yes		Yes		
Political Decentralization, 1990s	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes		Yes		Yes
Collapse of large, traditional parties, 1990s	Yes		Yes							Yes
<i>Feeding mechanisms</i>										
Immigration laws (favorable to leftists), 1960s-80s	Yes					Yes		Yes		
Failed/Aborted First-Generation Market Reforms, 1980s-90s	Yes						Yes			
<i>Institutional protection of the Military</i>										
Relatively Stable Budgets (no drastic cuts since 1970s)	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes			
Military Expansion in the 1980s	Yes				Yes	Yes			Yes	
Declining civilian oversight of the military	Yes					Yes				Yes
Lack of Right-wing Purges in the Military	Yes							Yes		

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