

VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY IN TRANSITION:
PROBLEMATIZING THE CHÁVEZ PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY IN TRANSITION: PROBLEMATIZING THE CHÁVEZ PERIOD

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In this thesis, the democratic transformation in Venezuela during the President Chávez period (1999 – 2013) is analyzed by adopting a middle-range democracy approach which brings socio-economic equality and social rights back into the quality of democracy analysis. The study identified a paradox of the democratic transition in Venezuela in this period which arose from, on the one hand, the tension between the weakening horizontal and vertical accountability mechanisms and, on the other hand, improvements on socio-economic rights and expanded political participation. It is argued here that procedural democracy approaches remain insufficient to assess the impact of the recent transformations on the quality of Venezuelan democracy. During the Chávez period the socio-economic equality and social rights of Venezuelans improved substantially and President Chávez's new participatory democracy model integrated the hitherto excluded sectors of the population. However in the same period erosion in the institutions

of horizontal accountability have significantly constrained the potential of this progress in the socio-economic equality for a genuine political inclusion or empowerment for the masses, which ultimately weakened the democratic quality in Venezuela during the Chávez period.

Keywords: Venezuelan democracy, Hugo Chávez, accountability, socioeconomic equality, social rights

ÖZ

VENEZÜELLA'DA DEMOKRASIYE GEÇİŞ: CHÁVEZ DÖNEMİNİN SORUNSALLAŞTIRILMASI

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Bu tez çalışmasında Venezüella Devlet Başkanı Hugo Chávez'in yönetimi dönemindeki (1999 – 2013) demokratik değişim orta-prosedürel demokratik yaklaşım çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın temel amaçlarından biri, sosyo-ekonomik faktör ve sosyal hakların demokrasi kalitesi analizine tekrar dâhil edilmesidir. Başkan Chávez döneminde ortaya çıkan demokratik paradoks, bu çalışmanın temel argümanını oluşturmaktadır. 1998 yılından 2013 yılına kadar devam eden demokratik süreç boyunca Venezüella'da sosyo-ekonomik şartlar ve sosyal haklar konularında pek çok ilerleme kaydedildiği halde dikey ve yatay hesap verilebilirlik kurumları zarar görmüştür. Chávez dönemi demokrasisini analiz etmek için orta-prosedürel demokratik yaklaşım kullanılmıştır çünkü minimal-prosedürel demokratik yaklaşım geliştirmekte olan ülke demokrasilerinin analizinde yetersiz kalmaktadır. Bu dönem boyunca Venezüella demokrasisi pakt demokrasisinden katılımcı demokrasiye geçmiştir. Katılımcı demokrasi modeli ile Venezüella halkının daha önceki yönetimlerde dışlanmış kesimleri, tekrar

demokratik sisteme entegre edilmiştir. Ancak bu dönemde hesap verilebilirlik kurumları ciddi derecede zarar görmüştür. Bu yüzden sosyo-ekonomik gelişmeler Venezüella demokrasi kalitesini beklenen şekilde olumlu etkileyememiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Venezüella demokrasisi, Hugo Chávez, hesap verilebilirlik, sosyoekonomik eşitlik, sosyal haklar

To Comandante
Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías

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While this thesis was preparing, Hugo Chávez died from cancer on 5 March 2013. Even though his presidential terms and their democratic or authoritarian characteristics were arguable, his socioeconomic policies and participatory democracy model incorporated the formerly excluded Venezuelans to the society. This improvement showed that another governance system is possible. For this reason, this study dedicated to Hugo Chávez and all Chavistas.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Acción Democrática
BCV	Banco Central de Venezuela
CANTV	La Compañía Anónima Nacional Teléfonos de Venezuela
CC	Communal Council
CNE	Consejo Nacional Electoral
COPEI	Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
CTV	Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela
DISIP	Dirección de Servicios de Inteligencia Policial
EOI	Export Oriented Industrialization
HDI	Human Development Index
IRI	International Republican Institute
ISI	Import Substitution Industrialization
LAC	Latin American Countries
MAS	Movimiento al Socialismo
MBR-200	El Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200
MEP	Movimiento Electoral del Pueblo
MIR	Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria
MUD	Mesa de la Unidad Democrática
MVR	Movimiento Quinta República
OAS	Organization of American States
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PCV	El Partido Comunista de Venezuela
PDVSA	Petróleos de Venezuela
PODEMOS	Por la Democracia Social
PPT	Patria Para Todos
PSUV	Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela
RCTV	Radio Caracas Televisión Internacional

SENECA	Sistema Eléctrico del Estado Nueva Esparta
SIDOR	Siderúrgica de Orinoco
SUNACOOOP	Superintendencia Nacional de Cooperativa
TVES	Televisora Venezolana Social
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
URD	Unión Republicana Democrática
VTV	Corporación Venezolana de Televisión

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. 1. The Subject Matter and the Theoretical Significance of the Thesis:

This thesis study analyzes the transformation of the democratic system in Venezuela after the election of Hugo Chávez as President in 1998; by assessing the political and social changes that took place in the country during his presidency. Unlike advanced democracies in the West, developing or underdeveloped democracies have faced significant socioeconomic problems since the establishment of their democratic regimes. These socioeconomic problems are also likely to undermine their democratic consolidation process. For this reason, the starting point of this thesis is the contention that socioeconomic progress should be included in democratic quality analysis.

In parallel to this argument, while assessing the democratization process in Venezuela during the Chávez period, the socioeconomic dimension of democracy (i.e., improvements in citizens' access to education, health and housing services, progress on gender equality issues, etc.) is integrated into the analysis alongside the political dimensions of democracy. Because it includes socioeconomic factors in the democratization analysis, this thesis highlights a paradox of democratic development in Venezuela under the Chavez Presidency. The main contention of this thesis is that despite considerable progress in the participatory and social dimensions of Venezuelan democracy during the Chavez period (1998-2013), the quality of democracy experienced a setback in the area of accountability due to legal and constitutional changes and policies that weakened the democratic

functions of vertical and horizontal accountability institutions. As a result, the prospects for realizing the expected benefits of the improved socioeconomic conditions of the hitherto excluded portions of the population and for the expansion of political participation channels for democracy in Venezuela during and after the Chavez period have remained weak. In particular, the quality of Venezuelan democracy has largely deteriorated through the substantial erosion of the democratic accountability dimension.

There are two main contributions of this thesis to the democratization literature in the context of the quality of democracy and empirical democracy analysis. In the empirical democracy literature, and particularly in democratic transition studies, a procedural approach to democracy has been adopted. However, this approach falls short of providing an accurate analysis on the subject, especially in the case of Venezuelan democracy when considering all of the political, social and economic developments during the Chávez period and their effects on Venezuelan democracy and society. This thesis argues that without taking into consideration the socioeconomic developments during this period, one can only obtain a partial picture of the new phase of democratization under the Chavez administration. The effects of improvements in socioeconomic policies on democracy have been previously examined by some scholars (O'Donnell, 2004a; Campbell, 2008; Canache, 2012). More recently, Merkel's 'embedded democracy' concept and his middle range democracy approach also integrated the socioeconomic dimension into the conceptualization of democracy. The theoretical approach to the study of democratic quality in this thesis also takes as its starting point the significance of socio-democratic factors as a major component of a democratic regime in empirical assessments of existing democracies. However, as will be elaborated upon in the following chapter, unlike Merkel, socioeconomic factors are not seen as 'external' components of a democratic regime that are assumed to have an indirect influence on the effectiveness of a democracy. One of the major objectives of this analysis is to re-integrate socioeconomic factors in empirical democracy analyses. It can be argued that apart from the consolidated

democracies of the “West”—which have formed the basis for conceptualizations of procedural (minimal) democracy by Western scholars—nearly all other democratic regimes in non-Western contexts suffer from socioeconomic problems. In contrast, developed countries had overcome most of their socioeconomic problems before they consolidated their democratic regimes. In developing countries, however, the challenges from socioeconomic problems have gone hand in hand with the challenges of democratization. This difference of course affects assessments of the quality of democracy in different countries. To evaluate the quality of democracy in Canada and Venezuela, one must look at different dimensions because their relative significance in terms of influencing the democratic quality of the polity is likely to be different. In the case of Venezuela, socioeconomic improvements must be analyzed because they have certain effects on the participation, responsiveness and vertical accountability dimensions of democracy. At the same time, the erosion of the institutions of horizontal accountability should also be placed into context to understand and demonstrate how socioeconomic and institutional dimensions intertwine. Hence, in this thesis, a middle range approach/conceptualization of democracy (as in Merkel’s more recent ‘embedded democracy analysis’) is adopted to underscore the significance of the socioeconomic developments during the Chavez period and their effects on Venezuelan democracy together with the institutional changes that have significantly transformed the political system.

During his presidency, Chávez was accused of being an authoritarian leader who employed populist policies to mobilize support and maintain power that ultimately weakened Venezuela’s democratic institutions (O’Neill 2005, Carrión, 2007; Brewer-Carías 2010; Weyland, Madrid and Hunter, 2010; Human Rights Watch Report of 2012; Mainwaring 2012 etc.). The democratic process in Venezuela during the Chávez presidency has yet to be fully analyzed almost two years after his unexpected death. There have been many studies that have examined the Chávez period; however, all of these studies focused on different aspects of Venezuelan democracy, such as Chávez’s 21st Century Socialism Model (Ellner,

2008), the dynamics of presidentialism (Harnecker, 2007), land redistribution and oil policies (Hidalgo, 2013), historical accounts of Chávez's rise to power (McCoy and Myers, 2004), Chavismo as left-wing populism (Cobb, 2014), class structure and the democratic struggles of Venezuela's underprivileged (Ellner, 2014).

In Venezuela, a new democratic period began with the election of 1998, which brought Hugo Chávez to power. With the 1998 election, Venezuela's previous democracy collapsed, and when a new constitution was drafted and ratified, the country's political system changed from the bottom to the top. In particular, the checks and balances system was transformed because under the new constitution, the president could abolish the National Assembly, and the members of the Supreme Court were now appointed by the National Assembly. After the ratification of the new constitution via popular referendum, the so-called 2000 Mega Elections were held under the new constitution from the local level to the governmental level, including gubernatorial elections. After these elections, nearly every elected office changed hands in favor of Hugo Chávez and his Fifth Republican Movement (MVR). The new participatory democracy was thus established as President Chávez stated during a televised interview with him;

We have established a participatory democracy moving away from the liberal democracy, the democracy of the rich and elites against the poor. The people decided to amend the constitution and opened the possibility to not only choose their president but also mayors, the governors, and deputies. However, this is not a fully developed democracy, our democracy is in progress¹

On the economic front, the new administration pursued aggressive nationalization policies (from electricity companies to telecommunication companies and oil companies to television and radio stations), and billions of dollars of state funds

¹ King, Larry. (2009). Larry King Live. CNN. Interview with Hugo Chávez. Date accessed 15.09.2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/bestoftv/2013/03/06/lkl-hugo-chavez-interview-youtube.cnn.html?iref=videosearch>

were transferred to social missions (including a free health care system, free education, free housing services, and free vocational courses). In return, these socioeconomic policies enabled the establishment of new participatory channels such as the Bolivarian circles (communal councils) to integrate the hitherto excluded masses, including the rural and urban poor, into politics. These and other radical economic and political changes had far-reaching effects on Venezuelan democracy.

The rise to power of Hugo Chávez came against a background of deteriorating political and economic conditions; in particular, the uninterrupted competitive electoral process in the country had produced a stagnant political system through the demise of the bi-party system that had previously monopolized socio-political dynamics. It can be argued that the political ascendancy of President Chávez from outside the established party system in 1998 was the result of a decades-long process that led to the alienation of the Venezuelan people from the existing political parties, the elites and the economic system. As noted above, the Chávez period and its populism have been the subject of many analyses by area specialists as well as democracy scholars. The existing research has examined both positive and negative aspects in terms of democratic institutionalization (Gott, 2005; Ellner, 2005; Weisbrot, 2007). During the Chávez period, there were important improvements in the distribution of wealth within the country (for example, extreme poverty in the country plummeted from 29.8 percent in 2003 to 7.2 percent in 2009, while the overall poverty index fell from 49 percent in 1998 to 24.2 percent by the end of 2009). At the same time, however, there were significant political developments that disrupted the balance of power in the country. The relationship between these positive and negative developments and their effects on Venezuelan democracy must be analyzed by asking the major question that is raised in this thesis: How did the quality of Venezuelan democracy change after the 1998 elections through the positive socioeconomic and participatory policies that facilitated democratization and the institutional changes implemented by the Chávez administration?

This thesis also contends that to address this question adequately, a procedural democracy definition/approach that focuses on the electoral process fails to provide a comprehensive and accurate assessment of the Venezuelan case. One needs to analyze the impact of Chávez's socialist social and economic policies in relation to the new institutional framework of Venezuelan democracy with specific reference to their implications for democratic accountability because egalitarian social policies enable citizens to participate in the political process more and thus contribute to creating a consolidated democracy (Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1997:324).

The three major conceptualizations used in the empirical democracy analysis are minimal, middle-range and maximalist conceptualizations that underlie the procedural and substantive conceptions of democracy. Within empirical democracy analyses in the 20th century, the democratic transition and consolidation literature used a procedural (minimal) democracy definition that departed from the polyarchy concept of Robert Dahl² (1971). Procedural conceptions find that surrounding freedoms are sufficient criteria for determining whether a regime is democratic (Dahl, 1971; Schumpeter, 1942; Przeworski; 1999). The minimalist conceptualization was considered sufficient and empirically convenient until the 1990s. However, the fact that some democracies were stuck in the transition and post-transition process for years, while others were not progressing toward full consolidation due to problems with institutionalization led scholars to revisiting the major concerns of democratization studies. More importantly, the abundance of so-called hybrid regimes that retained certain authoritarian features without sacrificing their competitive electoral processes led to the analysis of the different components of existing democracies. Hence, criticisms of the procedural democracy approach have been proposed since the 1990s. Dahl's polyarchy concept (1971) and his minimal definition of democracy were criticized because the concept could not go beyond an electoral democracy approach and paid minimal attention to the

² Polyarchy defines the minimum criteria of a political regime in order to be called as democracy at a minimum level.

freedoms of opposition and participation that make free electoral competition possible and allow a system to be called democratic.

Middle-range approaches such as that introduced by Karl (1990) began to be offered, and these studies considered additional democracy dimensions in definitions of democracy, such as horizontal accountability, responsiveness, civilian rule over the military, and the rule of law. In fact, scholars searching for middle-range conceptualizations added democratic control mechanisms to their concepts of democracy, including establishing a balance of power between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. In this context, horizontal accountability (control of elected officials by independent institutions) emerged as an important instrument for providing a balance of power. Other criteria such as responsiveness, the rule of law, civil rights, and civilian control over the military were added to the middle-range conceptualizations of democracy by different scholars (Schmitter and Karl, 1991; Sodaro, 2004; Diamond and Morlino 2005; Bühlmann, Merkel, Wessels and Müller, 2008). Most recently, Merkel made a substantial contribution to the quality of democracy analyses and introduced the “embedded democracy” concept as a middle-range democracy conceptualization when he set out to answer the question, “what is an ideal democracy?” However, all of these approaches foremost examined the political dimensions of democracy; the socioeconomic dimensions remained of secondary importance, even in these middle-range conceptualizations. This deficiency was also criticized by several scholars (Cohen, 1997; Dryzek, 2000; Gordon, 2001; Chambers, 2003; O’Donnell, 2004a; Campbell, 2008).

The broad conceptualization of democracy refers to the substantive or maximalist democracy understanding, which integrates equality in the social and economic sphere and social justice into analyses of democracy (Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1997). Maximalists claimed that to provide a more comprehensive analysis of a democratic regime, the quality of the society is just as important as

the quality of politics in measuring a democracy's depth. However, there has been a lack of consensus among scholars regarding the utility of integrating the socioeconomic dimension; rather, socioeconomic variables were included among the prerequisites of democratization, or socioeconomic equality was assumed to be an end result of democracy (Karl, 1990). However, especially in the case of Latin America, the socioeconomic problems inherited from authoritarian governments made voter turnout rates lower, and the masses therefore became politically immobile, which made democratic regimes less effective. However, it has been argued that improvements in socioeconomic conditions and equality could reverse this situation and contribute greatly to democratic improvements (Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1997:333). This concern with socioeconomic equality and increasing political participation can be related to concerns about the weakness of institutionalized democracies and the varieties of polyarchy, which led to a new wave of democratization approaches after the 1990s that analyzed and compared existing democracies from the perspective of democratic quality (Diamond and Morlino, 2005; O'Donnell, 2004a; Campbell, 2008). In this context, some scholars examined the quality of democracies by identifying specific criteria, including socioeconomic equality. Researchers argued that to provide a comprehensive analysis of a democratic regime, the quality of the society is just as important as the quality of politics in measuring the quality of a democracy. Instead of focusing on the electoral regime in their analyses, individuals as citizens were examined as the main agents of democracy (O'Donnell, 2004a). Equality, public knowledge and social rights became important for quality of democracy studies because scholars argued that there is a direct relationship between society and democracy, and their progress parallels each other (Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1997).

Based on the above-mentioned aspects of the critical approaches to procedural democracy studies and concerns about the more recent quality of democracy studies, this thesis analyzes the Chávez period by employing a middle-range approach to democracy by taking into consideration the participatory and

socioeconomic dimensions of democracy. During his presidency, Hugo Chávez put into place principles of participatory democracy by ending the forty-year reign of the Punto Fijo democracy. The constitution of Venezuela was changed through a referendum in 1998; community councils were established, and recall elections for the President were held in 2004 for the first time in Venezuelan history. Incorporating society into the democratic process became a very important part of Venezuelan democracy. From the perspective of the quality of democracy approach, analyzing the Venezuelan case in this period while ignoring the socioeconomic aspects of democracy will likely provide an incomplete picture of Venezuelan democracy. Therefore, to provide a more satisfactory, broader analysis of the transformation of Venezuelan democracy, the social aspects of democracy also must be assessed because the progress made on economic equality and social rights under the Chávez administration are too crucial to be ignored. According to the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index (HDI) Annual Reports, Venezuela's HDI values increased from Hugo Chávez's first presidential term to today (Venezuela's HDI value was 0.6 in 1995, and it reached 0.8 in 2011³). Additionally, according to the GINI Index of Income Equality, in 2008 Venezuela achieved one of the best values on the continent, and Venezuela also attained the best value for gender equality on the continent⁴.

The socialist status of the modern Venezuelan economic system⁵ complicates analyses on the country's democratic quality because the literature on the quality of democracy heavily depends on liberal economic principles (Merkel, 2004; Diamond and Morlino, 2005 etc.). For example, scholars such as Merkel

³ Retrieved from www.worldbankdata.com on December 10, 2014.

⁴ United Nations Development Group's Gender Scorecard 2010 Report, available on 19.09.14 http://www.undg.org/content/programming_reference_guide_%28undaf%29/un_country_programming_principles/gender_equality

⁵ Within the context of this thesis socialist economy means the expropriation, income redistribution policies and social missions of Hugo Chávez.

specifically included liberal economic principles (such as the status of private property rights) in their analyses of the quality of democracy. However, the issue of how different types of economic systems affect democratic quality is still debated; hence, one cannot establish a direct and positive relationship between a market economy and democracy. To provide a more objective analysis of the subject, the assumed relationship between liberal economic policies and democratic quality should also be questioned in the case of Venezuela. This thesis does not fully address this question, yet it also challenges the assumed correlation, and by integrating institutional factors into the relationship between socioeconomic equality policies (along with expanded participation) and democracy, it tries to shed light on how we should examine the relationship between the nature/model of economic policies and the quality of a democracy.

During the third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991), new democratic regimes were established all around the world (from Latin America to Eastern Europe to Asia). However, the democratic quality of these newly established regimes became questionable, and their unconsolidated nature has been a subject of inquiry for many different scholars since the 1990s. Many of these hybrid regimes were sometimes further characterized by their deficiencies as delegative, illiberal, and defective democracies. For example, presidential systems that lacked or weakened horizontal accountability mechanisms were characterized as delegative democracies (O'Donnell 1994). According to O'Donnell, the socioeconomic problems of Latin American countries (especially after the 1980s debt crisis) affected the democratization process in these countries, and there was a direct relationship between the un-institutionalized nature of these delegative democracies and their socioeconomic problems. To solve these socioeconomic problems, O'Donnell suggested democratic institutionalization because if democratic institutionalization can be attained, institutions are in turn likely to solve their socioeconomic problems (O'Donnell, 1998: 115 - 118).

In the case of Venezuela, the Chávez administration curbed the powers of some crucial institutions such as the constitutional courts, while at the same time, presidential powers were substantially increased. However, socioeconomic improvements were also very visible during this period in Venezuela. Therefore, the relationship between the de-institutionalization process and socioeconomic developments and their effect on Venezuelan democracy needs to be evaluated. For this analysis, the political and social aspects of democracy must be reconciled in the analytical framework.

Table 1: The Quality of Venezuelan Democracy in Different Measures⁶

	1999	2013
Freedom House	Partly Free – Score 4.0 (1= Best, 7 = Worst)	Partly Free – Score 5.0 (1 = Best, 7 = Worst)
Polity IV Project	Democracy – Score 8.0 (10 = Best, -10 = Worst)	Open Anocracy – Score 4.0 (10 = Best, -10 = Worst)
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index	No Data	Hybrid Regime – Score 5.15 (Best = 10, Worst = Below 4)

Table 1 shows the democracy reports of three different organizations on Venezuelan democracy; Freedom House, Polity IV and Economist. According to Freedom House Report, Venezuela considered as a partly free regime. Also Polity IV project put Venezuela as one of the best democracies in 1999, however according to 2013 Report, Venezuela put under the open anocracy⁷ category. Lastly, Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index categorized Venezuela as a hybrid regime in 2013.

⁶ Retrieved from the official site of Polity IV; <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>, www.eiu.com, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2013/venezuela#.VFuW6zSsWM4> on October 25th.

⁷ Anocracy means mixed authoritarian regimes. The Polity scores can also be converted into regime categories in a suggested three part categorization of "autocracies" (-10 to -6), "anocracies" (-5 to +5 and three special values: -66, -77 and -88), and "democracies" (+6 to +10).

President Chávez's socialist economic model and its implementation and effects on Venezuelan society and more importantly on the new participatory democracy model could not be analyzed under the liberal bias of some of the existing democracy surveys. For a more objective analysis, identifying specific components (excluding liberal economy notions) of democratic quality that are closer to the middle-range conceptualizations of democracy is necessary. Thus, this study problematizes the relationship between the political and socioeconomic dimensions of democracy. It is argued here that for high democratic quality, the link between the participatory dimension and the socioeconomic equality dimension is provided by the institutions of democratic accountability.

Two specific political and institutional components utilized by this study that are extremely important for middle-range conceptualizations of democracy as well as for quality of democracy analyses are vertical and horizontal accountability. These two concepts are the main points of origin for middle-range conceptualizations because they provide control over the executive branch by both citizens (through free, fair and recurring elections) and independent control mechanisms (between elections). When control over the administration is provided by citizens and independent institutions and the balance of power is provided through institutional responsiveness and accountability mechanisms, democratic quality is likely to improve because elected administrators will be obliged to make decisions in favor of collective will; otherwise, they will face lawful consequences. Additionally, in such a scenario, citizens would start to take the electoral process more seriously because they would know that they can change their government through a meaningful electoral process, allowing participation rates to increase.

The nature of the electoral process and horizontal accountability has been one of the most disputed topics in the Venezuelan political system under the Chávez administration. This thesis demonstrates that, although the balance of power in

Venezuela was disrupted, progress on equality and social rights was undeniable. As previously stated, Venezuela implemented a socialistic economic model and has expanded the provision of free health care, food, housing services and education for large sectors of the population through social missions that are mostly funded by the state-owned petroleum company, which was fully nationalized by the Chávez administration. In fact, since 1998, socioeconomic inequality in Venezuela has decreased rapidly, and in 2008, Venezuela became the most equal society on the continent. Constitutional rights such as free health care and education and state-funded social rights further decreased inequality within the society. Therefore, the impact of these improvements in society on democratic quality should be analyzed. For example, gender equality enables the increased participation of women in both society and politics, which also creates higher rates of participation. Additionally, higher rates of educational achievement are likely to make citizens more informed and politically conscious. Therefore, evaluating the relationship between these developments and their effect on Venezuelan democracy is crucial. The effects of the improvements in education, gender equality and the socioeconomic rights of the Venezuelan people on Venezuelan democracy will be demonstrated through the use of the Latinobarómetro public surveys⁸.

1. 2. The Research Procedure:

This thesis is a case study carried out through qualitative research in the context of empirical democracy analyses. This study is largely based on the interpretation of the secondary sources (books, journals, articles and essays etc. on the Chávez period) to produce a largely exploratory study to analyze the Venezuelan democratic quality under Chávez period. Primary data sources are also consulted,

⁸ Latinobarómetro is an annual public opinion survey that involves some 20,000 interviews in 18 Latin American countries, representing more than 600 million inhabitants. Latinobarómetro Corporation is a non-profit NGO based in Santiago, Chile, and is solely responsible for the production and publication of the data.

albeit to a lesser extent, to provide published interviews and speeches of Venezuelan government officials as well as Hugo Chávez (translated to English).

Social scientists have made wide use of the case study which is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1984; 23). The importance of case study stems from combining theoretical knowledge with “real-life context”. However criticisms on the case study as a research method are various. Some scholars (Harvey, Smith and Wilkinson, 1984) argued that the researchers of the case studies may not reach generalizable conclusions. There could be different data sources which created by different institutions with different variables, combining them within the same context while pursuing objectivity may seem as a difficult task. However Yin (1984) states that these shortcomings are not innate, and still represent opportunities for development within the research strategy.

The contribution of this case study carried out for the thesis is applying the middle range democracy conceptualization to the study of President Chávez’s policies. It analyses their effects on the Venezuelan democracy since the institutional realm of democracy and the socioeconomic equality dimension are intertwined. This case study begins with providing the background of Venezuelan political history. Then, specific variables of middle-range conceptualizations will be analyzed under the political and economic policies of Chávez administration.

In terms of the theoretical framework of this thesis relevant aspect of the literature on the quality of democracy will be critically analyzed to operationalize democratic variables; vertical and horizontal accountability, participation, social rights and social equality. In this thesis, “deductive approach” will be followed, which first laid out a general principle and expectation based on the literature of

the quality of democracy. Moreover, throughout the research, an interdisciplinary procedure and approach involving the use of historical, economic, social and political data will be used. This data is collected mainly from the independent institutions and their official sites and reports such the World Bank Data, Latinobarómetro and United Nations Development Programme and also the Central Bank of Venezuela and other relevant ministries.

1. 3. The Organization of the Thesis:

This thesis consists of five chapters. After the introduction which lays out the subject matter and the context and provides the research procedure, the second chapter provides a framework for the empirical analysis of the changes in Venezuela from during Chávez Presidency by overviewing the theoretical background on democracy conceptualizations used in the literature and underlining the significance of the of quality of democracy approach, the main determinants of the democratization process and their role in the democratic quality in the context of Latin America. The case of the changing dynamics of the modern Venezuelan democracy is introduced from the perspective of the concerns of the framework adopted by this study. The third chapter provides a historical background on the Venezuelan political history from the independence period to 1998. The effects of the past developments on the modern Venezuelan politics are explained. In the fourth chapter, the Chávez period will be analyzed based upon the developments from 1999 to 2013 in terms of institutions of changes affecting accountability dimension of Venezuelan democracy, socioeconomic equality indicators and expanding participatory mechanisms. The fifth chapter analyzes the quality of Venezuelan democracy by problematizing the relationship between the accountability and participation aspects of its democratic system in the context of the legal and constitutional changes and transformations in the social economic equality policies. In the conclusion chapter, a restatement of the argument of the thesis and a summary of this study are provided by stressing the problematic aspects quality of democracy in Venezuela.

CHAPTER 2:

THE CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF DEMOCRACY AND THE ANALYSIS OF DEMOCRATIC QUALITY

This chapter briefly looks at the theoretical approaches on the conceptualization of democracy with specific reference to the empirical assessment of democratic quality. It also aims at specifying the relevant aspects of democratic quality which would enable us to assess Venezuelan democratic quality during the presidency of Hugo Chávez by linking participation and socio-economic equality dimension to the institutions of accountability.

As the numbers of democratic regimes increased rapidly all around the world since the late 1970s, this increase shifted scholars' focus on the democratic transition processes to the qualities of these newly established democratic regimes. These regimes raised the questions of "which qualities should a regime possess in order to be defined as democratic", and "under which conditions the democratization process could result in a fully democratic regime". In other words, the increasing numbers of states which claimed to be democracies created the need for assessing the democratic quality of these regimes by de-emphasizing the theoretical significance of democratic consolidation (Diamond and Morlino, 2005). However, the characteristics or the prerequisites of a qualified and consolidated democracy have remained unclear. Although it may be possible to measure a democratic regime with specific aspects of democracy, empirically specifying and theoretically justifying those aspects have proved a challenging task. Despite its impressive past democracy record since 1958, Venezuelan democracy has remained elitist and its quality came to be questioned during the

Chávez period. For the purposes of this thesis study, an assessment of the changes in the democratic quality of the Venezuelan democracy under the Chávez presidency calls for an overview of the debates on the significance of the institutional, participatory and structural aspects of democracy.

2. 1. Analyzing and Conceptualizing Democracy: The Limitations of the Procedural Approach

As many concepts and theories in social sciences, democracy too, has many different definitions. Therefore, the literature on the empirical democracy analysis is very broad. There is an ongoing debate on the characteristics of a democratic system regarding; what democracy is and what an ideal democracy should be (both in practice and theory). Democracies are more than their institutions; they depend upon a commitment of citizens and elites to exhibit and uphold certain political and social values. What those values might be, and the required degrees of commitment to them, are not easily identified. On this issue scholars employed different democracy conceptualizations changing from procedural ones to substantive ones. Analysis on procedural democracy conceptualizations have claimed that Dahl's *polyarchy* criteria were sufficient and therefore emphasized the importance of the electoral process for a democratic regime. However, after the 1990s with the increasing numbers of unconsolidated democracies with new problems and scholars were forced to search new conceptualizations of democracy.

At this point, middle range conceptualizations of democracy were introduced and specific institutional prerequisites included to the "good democracy" definition. In this context, according to Karl, regimes need to have wider political conditions in order to be labeled as democratic one (1990: 1). Karl's definition of democracy included four different dimensions; political competition, participation, horizontal accountability and civilian control over the military (especially in the Latin

American cases). Furthermore, a regime has to have certain preconditions for transforming democracy. These preconditions included an effective capitalist development, a political culture that embraces democratic principles, a bourgeoisie class that is more powerful than landed aristocracy and lastly, establishing relations with international market (1990: 3-4). For instance, according to Karl, Venezuelan democracy possessed strong historical roots because of the weakness of landed elites within the society. The oil industry made the bourgeois class more powerful than the land owner elites which prepared the necessary conditions for establishing a democratic regime.

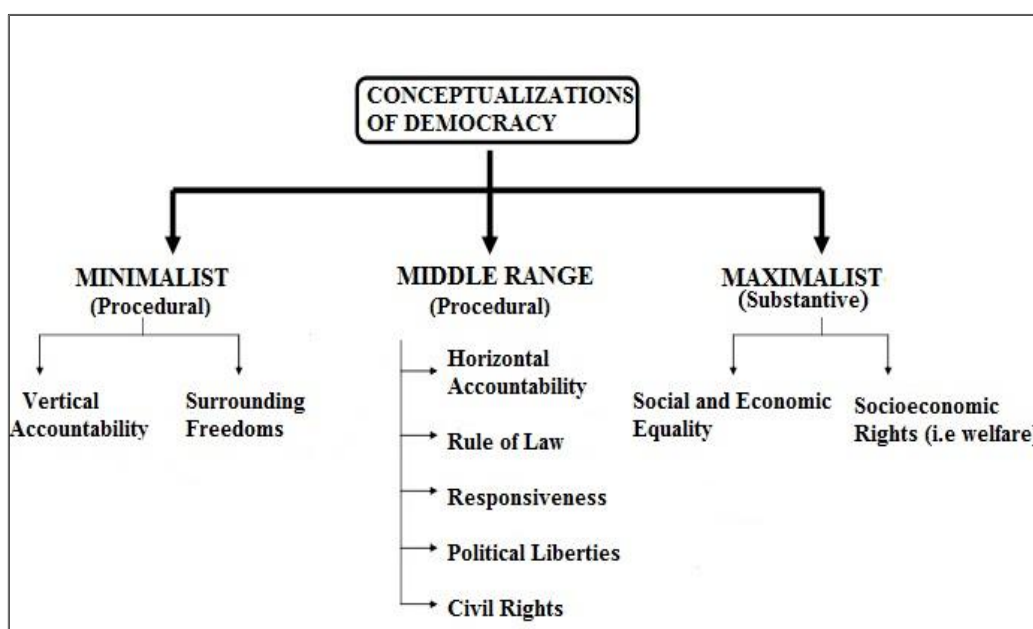


Figure 1: Constitutive Dimensions of Different Levels of Conceptualization of Democracy⁹

Moreover, other scholars like O'Donnell (2004a) and Tilly (2007) included additional criteria for their democracy conceptualizations under substantive

⁹ Sources are collected from the studies of; Schumpeter, 1942; Dahl, 1971; Karl, 1990; Lijphart, 1997; O'Donnell, 2004a; Przeworski, 2005; Tilly, 2007. Also source for visual arrangement of Figure 1: Author's own conceptualization.

concepts and studies the effects of social and economic conditions (in addition to political conditions) on the functioning of democratic systems, especially in Latin America as Figure 1 illustrates.

The most widely used definition of democracy employed by the recent democratization and democratic transition studies were first introduced by Dahl who identified the minimum criteria for defining a certain regime as democracy and created the term “*polyarchy*”¹⁰. Polyarchy is not exactly a fully developed democracy. On the contrary, polyarchy denotes the possession of the minimum criteria for defining a political regime as democracy in accordance with Dahl’s following requirements:

- *Freedom to form and join organizations,*
- *Freedom of expression, the right to vote,*
- *Eligibility for public office,*
- *The right to political leaders to compete for support,*
- *Alternative sources of information,*
- *Free and fair elections,*
- *Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference* (Dahl, 1971:3)

Likewise his predecessor, Schumpeter had defined democracy as that; “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (1942). Contemporary scholars, such as Przeworski, also referred to the procedural/minimalist conception of democracy as “Schumpeterian conception of democracy and as just a system in which rulers are selected by competitive elections” (1999: 23). In other words, according to these scholars, the minimum criterion for democracy is electoral regime and the control mechanism of an electoral regime provided by institutions of vertical accountability. Political accountability is basically composed of the necessary institutions for holding elected officials accountable for their political decisions to their citizens. “Modern

¹⁰ The term was originally conceptualized by Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom in 1953.

political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and co-operation of their elected representatives” (Schmitter and Karl, 1991: 80). Free, fair and competitive elections, high participation and strong political party system ensure vertical accountability. However, vertical accountability can only hold government accountable during elections. The absence of mechanisms of control over the government in between elections is the main point of criticism toward the minimum concept of democracy because minimum concepts of democracy largely focus on the electoral regime (vertical accountability). There are many scholars who find this as insufficient (Sodaro, 2004; Diamond and Morlino, 2005; Bühlmann, Merkel, Wessels and Müller; 2008 etc.) and for this reason they add new criteria for a broader conceptualization of democracy. Middle range conceptualizations of democracy stemmed from this point and they have come to focus on horizontal accountability mechanisms in democracies. Attempts at developing middle range conceptualizations of democracy such as Karl expanded the procedural definition to refer to democracies as those regimes with:

A set of institutions that permits the entire adult population to act as citizens by choosing their leading decision makers in competitive, fair, and regularly scheduled elections which are held in the context of the rule of law, guarantees for political freedom, and limited military prerogatives (Karl, 1990: 2)

In the same vein, Sodaro (2004) also came up with a broader definition by including horizontal accountability of the government to its citizens in his definition of democracy; “Democracy imposes legal limits on the government’s authority by guaranteeing certain rights and freedoms to their citizens” (Sodaro, 2004: 164). Likewise Bühlmann also identified the key concepts of democracy as equality, freedom; and *control* (by government and of government) (Bühlmann, 2008). Thus, while minimum conceptualizations incorporated vertical accountability, middle range conceptualizations included horizontal accountability

in addition to vertical accountability. Holding governments accountable for their political decisions in between elections is possible through the institutions of horizontal accountability. The role of these institutions (like the independent courts, non-governmental organizations, constitutional courts, ombudsman, opposition in the government, and corruption commissions etc.) are monitoring and investigating of the enforcement activities and via these institutions. Therefore the control over the government is possible in between elections and possible excessive use of power of the government can be eliminated. (Diamond and Morlino, 2005: xxi)

More recently, Merkel made a major contribution to the empirical democracy analysis by dissecting the components of democratic regime which represented another attempt to come up with middle-range conceptualizations of democracy by introducing the “*embedded democracy*” concept. Merkel’s objective was to distinguish between consolidated liberal democratic regimes and “their diminished sub-types” (2004: 33). Embedded democracy concept defines the political aspects of a fully developed democratic regime. According to Merkel, unlike Dahl’s polyarchy, the criteria of a democracy should be more inclusive, so he added five interdependent ‘partial regimes’ to his definition; *electoral regime, political rights, civil rights, horizontal accountability and effective power to govern* (2004: 36). An electoral regime could not be sufficient enough for a democracy, there also has to be institutional guarantees for citizens which provide the fulfillment of a democratic regime by the elected government. Also Merkel criticized the minimalist conceptualizations of democracy because of “the theoretically incomplete nature” of these conceptualizations (2004: 34). He emphasized that while elections are important for a democratic regime, the period in between elections and how the power exercised during this period by the elected government is more crucial (2004: 38).

As Figure 2 below illustrates, the electoral regime is at the center of Merkel’s embedded democracy model. However a sufficient definition of democracy

should include other dimensions such as political rights which are the second partial regime of Merkel's definition of embedded democracy. These political rights include the right to political communication and organization; the right to freedom of speech and opinion, right to association, demonstration and petition, lastly free media and access to information (2004: 36). Electoral regime and political rights secure the functional logic of democratic elections; also along with the electoral process, political rights support vertical accountability which is important but not enough for a fully functioning democratic regime.

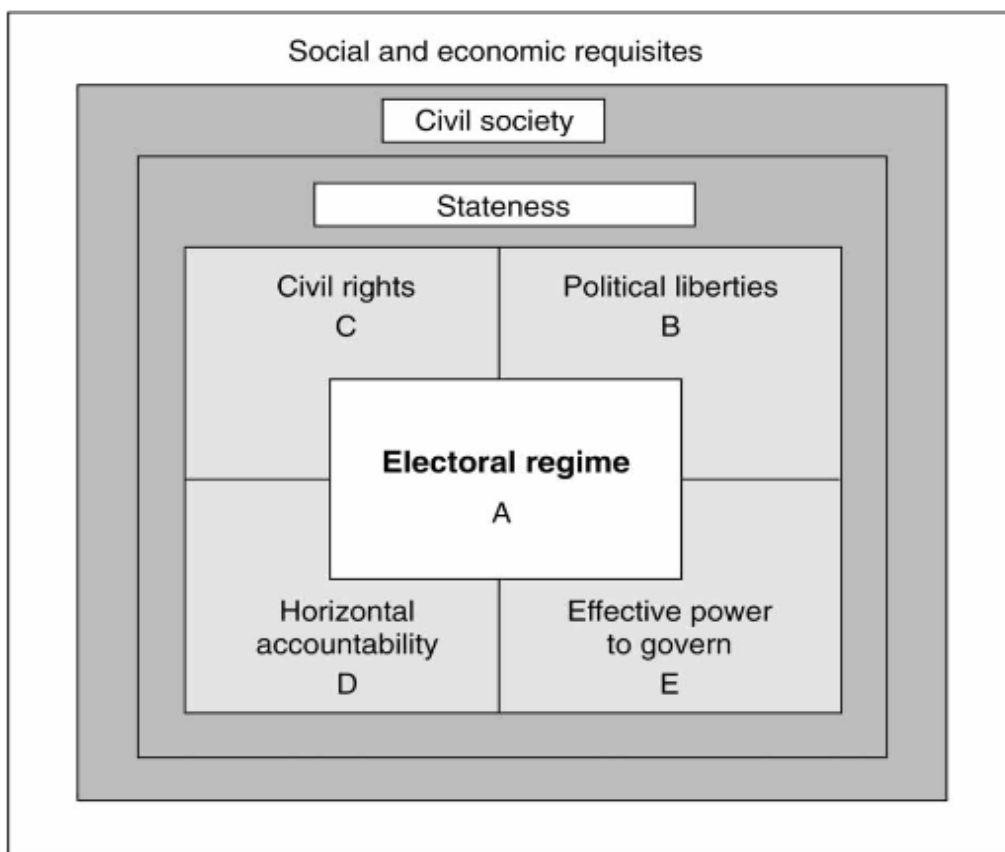


Figure 2: The Scheme of Embedded Democracy (Merkel, 2004: 37)

The third partial regime defined by Merkel is the civil rights which exist at the center of the rule of law. The rule of law is an important instrument for ensuring

the limitation of power of the government. The constitutional rights of citizens should limit the power of the government in order to provide a protection for its citizens against government. Governments should take into consider the minority rights too in order not to turn into the tyranny of the majority. These rights include;

Legal protection of life, freedom and property, protection against illegitimate arrest, exile, terror, torture or unjustifiable intervention into personal life, both on behalf of the state and on behalf of private or anti-establishment forces and individual actors. Equal access to the law and equal treatment by the law are basic civil rights (Merkel, 2004: 40)

Another partial regime of a fully developed democracy is the horizontal accountability which depends on the existence of state agencies that are legally empowered and factually willing and able to take actions ranging from routine oversight to criminal sanctions or impeachment in relation to possibly unlawful actions or omissions by other agents or agencies of state (O'Donnell, 1998: 117). The last partial regime of Merkel's fully developed democracy is the elected representative's effective power to govern (Merkel, 2004: 41). It is important to have a government which is not under the effect of military or other powerful actors for a developed democracy. Karl once added the importance of civilian control over the military in her democracy definition (1990). The authority of decision making should be only in the hands of democratically elected government and parliament. This criterion in fact what makes a democratic transition complete according to some transition scholars (Stepan and Linz, 1996).

Finally, in addition to those five important internal partial regimes defined by Merkel, there are also two more external partial regimes which include socioeconomic circumstances and civil society. Civil society provides the protection of individual from state intervention while social and economic requisites provide the suitable environment for a developed democracy.

According to Merkel, when all these internal and external partial regimes embedded in a democratic regime then that regime could be labeled as a fully democratic one as an embedded liberal democracy. However, these external partial regimes are not indispensable for embedded democracies, providing all the internal regimes are however a prerequisite. Because defining characteristics of a constitutional democracy without heavily relying on the outcomes of a regime is more realistic as Merkel stated; “a welfare state, fair distribution of economic goods or even social justice may be desired policy results of the democratic process of decision making, but they are not its defining elements” (2004:36). Even Merkel accepts that there could be a positive relation between democracy and economic development; he does not see the economic development as a must for democratization (2004: 44).

While Merkel does not see socioeconomic context of a political regime as an indispensable part of a democracy, other approaches put the society at the center of their conceptualizations. According to O’Donnell, only when citizens are secured against violence of the state and educated through a sufficiently developed social and economic status would they be able to form independent opinions (O’Donnell, 1993: 1355). According to the maximalist conceptualization of democracy, poverty and inequality in a society is a major obstacle for reaching a fully democratic regime and there is a direct relation between equality and democracy which should be always taken into consider. O’Donnell also assesses human beings as main agents of democracy and these agents endowed with three specific qualities; “autonomy for decision making”, “a cognitive ability for reasoning” and “a responsibility for their actions” (2004a; 11-12). According to O’Donnell, as main agents of democracy, human beings will make more democratic decisions when they have better social and economic status and public knowledge. Because improved socioeconomic circumstances enable citizens to participate into the political process more actively (Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1997:324). O’Donnell’s “*the low intensity citizenship*” concept also needs to be mentioned here (O’Donnell, 1993).He defined polyarchical regimes as

“brown areas”, because they are neither fully developed democracies nor authoritarian regimes, just in between. In these brown areas, while participatory rights of citizens are implemented very well by the government, the liberal dimension of democracy ignored by them (1993: 1360). The violation of the liberal dimension of a democratic regime creates a gap in between the society. Even all citizens have the right to vote, freedom of expression and right to join political organizations freely, rights of certain parts of a society (women, natives, slum dwellers etc.) violated by the state because of the inequality and socioeconomic problems within that society (1993: 1362). Even these problems are originating from social and economic dimensions of democracy; according to O’Donnell the concept of low intensity citizenship is included in political dimension of democracy (1993: 1362). In this context, it is possible to constitute a directly proportional relation between socioeconomic and political dimensions of democracy. A regime’s performance on socioeconomic problems effects the development of a democratization process, especially in polyarchies. More equal and well-to-do society would let more developed democracy under a polyarchical regime. This is very important because O’Donnell included polyarchies to his understanding of socioeconomic context while Merkel put developed democracies to his. Comparing two polyarchies like Venezuela and Argentina is very different than comparing two developed democracies like United States and Canada. While advanced “Western democracies” had overcome their socioeconomic problems long before establishing their democratic regimes, polyarchies are still struggling with their socioeconomic problems. Since Venezuela is a polyarchy, the effects of socioeconomic problems on the Venezuelan society need to be taken into consideration

In short, both minimalist and middle-range concepts of democracy focus on the political aspects of democracy. Thus, defining democracy only with its political aspects gets one to more *focused* (minimalist and middle-range) concepts of democracy while defining democracy with political, economic, and social aspects gets one more *comprehensive* (maximalist) concepts of democracy (Campbell,

2008:22). It is possible to say that when society gets more involved within the democratic process via community councils, civil society and non-governmental organizations (not just voting during elections) in their country, then that society will have greater responsiveness. This argument is supported by the maximalist concepts of democracy. The argument holds that political inclusion depends on high levels of education (knowledge), gender equality, and elimination of the income inequality etc. in return this inclusion will have positive reflect on the quality of democracy (O'Donnell, 2004; and Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1997). Democracy as representation of the collective will of people cannot simply be functional by just voting, rather it is a process which the people initiate by conscious decisions and sustain it by subscribing to its principles in theory and practice.

The relationship between democracy, socioeconomic circumstances and education was also taken up by the Philosophical Radicals¹¹ of the 19th century. Their thoughts stemmed from the concerns for reformation of the society by education. They claimed that if a society had more political conscious citizens, their regime would be more liberal. Their slogan was “educate people and let them vote freely” (Stephen, 2008). This notion was also revisited by several scholars over the years (Dewey, 1916; Dahl, 1998; O'Donnell, 2004a; Campbell, 2008 etc.) Like these scholars, Merkel also contributed the literature on the subject and argued that one of the causes of defective democracies as “the level of modernization”; “an asymmetrical distribution of economic, cultural and intellectual resources promotes acute inequality of political resources of action and power among political actors” (2004: 52).

Table 2 below demonstrates high levels of positive correlation between education levels (measured by the average years of schooling in a country as estimated by Robert Barro and Jong-Wha Lee in 2001), and the subsequent 40-year average of

¹¹ These Philosophers and politicians who were based their approach to democracy and society on the utilitarian theories of Jeremy Bentham.

the Polity IV democracy index. That democracy index runs from zero to ten, where countries with index values less than 3 are not democracies at all and countries with index values of about seven are reasonably well-functioning democracies. In sum, the relationship between overall education levels and democracy can be seen clearly in that countries which have citizens with higher education levels are more democratic than others.

Table 2: The Relationship between Education and Democracy¹²

Country	Average Years of Schooling in the 25+ Population, 1960,	Average Polity IV Democracy Index, 1960 – 2000
Afghanistan	1.095	0
Argentina	4.998	4.14634
Australia	9.43	10
Belgium	7.46	10
Bolivia	4.223	4.19512
Brazil	2.827	4.175
Canada	8.368	10

2. 2. Analyzing the Flawed Democratization Processes in Latin American Polities: Bringing the Socioeconomic Institutions Back In:

During the third wave of global democratic expansion (1970s - 1990s) the numbers of electoral regimes increased rapidly (Huntington, 1991). However the third wave democratization was mostly criticized by scholars because of its hollowness i.e. due to the unconsolidated and non-institutionalized nature of the new democracies. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, political scientists observed that most of the Latin American democracies which came into being within the

¹² Glaeser, 2009, "Want a stronger democracy? Invest in education", New York Times, date accessed; 19.09.14 http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/03/want-a-stronger-democracyeducation/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0&module=ArrowsNav&contentCollection=Business%20Day&action=keypress®ion=FixedLeft&pgtype=Blogs

third wave could not be consolidated and institutionalized. Thus scholar's focuses shifted from regime changes to the characteristics of these newly established democratic regimes. Karl and Schmitter defined these newly established flawed democracies as "differently democratic ones"; they were democratic but also lack of different democratic components like, competition or parliamentary sovereignty. As they put it "since no single set of institutions, practices or values embodies democracy, polities moving away from authoritarian rule can mix different components to produce different democracies" (Schmitter and Karl, 1991: 118). Some of these new type of democracies (neither fully democratic nor authoritarian but in between) were subsequently labelled as hybrid regimes in which;

Elections are often free and fair, yet important sectors remain politically and economically disenfranchised. Militaries support civilian presidents, but they resist efforts by civilians to control internal military affairs, dictate security policy, make officers subject to the judgment of civil courts, or weaken their role as the ultimate arbiters of politics. Impunity is condemned, yet judiciaries remain weak, rights are violated, and contracts are broken (Karl, 1995: 80)

A hybrid regime is neither a developed democracy nor an authoritarian one. They could not be transformed into consolidated democracies. All of these hybrid regimes suffered from the lack of or weakness of institutionalization or de-institutionalization problems or they ended up as 'informally institutionalized regimes' (O'Donnell, 1996: 35). Through the years, different scholars defined these countless types of hybrid regimes as defective, delegative, illiberal, exclusive democracies etc. (Bogaards; 2009: 400). All these different types of flawed democracies lacked some of the critical components of democracy, most notably horizontal accountability and rule of law, and even suffered from unfair electoral process. Later on, Merkel classified defective democracies as; "exclusive democracies, which offer only limited guarantees with regard to political rights; domain democracies, in which powerful groups condition and limit the autonomy of elected leaders; and illiberal democracies, which only provide partial civil

rights” (2004). Levitsky and Way called them competitive authoritarianism and argued that hybrid regimes flourished in the post-cold war era although they were no less frequent before the 1990s (Levitsky and Way: 2010).

In this context, as a sub-type of hybrid regimes or defective democracies, delegative democracy was identified as a sub-type of a hybrid regime by O’Donnell (1994). Delegative democracies are polyarchies; yet, they are not evolving towards representative democracies. In delegative democracies the elected presidents of a country put themselves above the political parties and institutions. These presidents also perceive the political institutions as an obstacle to their presidency, so in delegative democracies horizontal accountability of the president becomes constrained which results with a weak institutionalization. In Latin American case, the socioeconomic problems were the main reason for these hybrid regimes and delegative democracies because these problems created an urgent demand from the citizens toward their governments to solve those (1994). The governments’ response was implementing International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) packages (as in Argentina, Peru and Bolivia) which would further deepen the socioeconomic inequalities (1994: 63). In fact the socioeconomic problems of the new democratic regimes created “a strong sense of urgency and provided fertile terrain for unleashing the delegative propensities” (1994: 65). This created a vicious cycle which in return led to hybrid regimes. Lastly O’Donnell offers political institutionalization as a solution for delegative democracies; “a decisive coalition of broadly supported political leaders who take great care in creating and strengthening democratic political institutions” (1994: 56).

As a significant variant of part of Merkel’s ‘defective democracy’ (as opposed to embedded democracies) an illiberal democratic regime is characterized by a situation in which “the executive and legislative controls of the state are only weakly limited by the judiciary” (Merkel, 2004: 49). This damages horizontal accountability. Merkel puts delegative democracy into this categorization since in a delegative democratic regime the horizontal accountability of the government

and the checks and balances system is harmed by the government by curbing the scrutiny powers of the legislature and judiciary.

As already stated before, the mushroom growth of the democratic regimes after the late 1970s shifted the analysis from consolidation to defining the new type of unconsolidated democracies by problematizing the quality of these new democracies. Why do these democracies stay unconsolidated? For answering this question scholars started to define their developed democracy concepts through the quality of democracy literature and to categorize different weaknesses of different unconsolidated regimes and created hybrid regime concept. Then they took another step for analyzing the quality of these newly established democracies by using different democratic quality criteria. Thus, the specification of the democratic quality of these regimes would make easier to reach accurate conclusions and suggestions on the consolidation and institutionalization process of them. The analyses of the type of these flawed democracies contributed the literature on the quality of democracy by classifying hybrid regimes, identifying different problems of democracy mechanisms, and pointing to the causes of these problems. In short, studies on the quality of democracy and of hybrid regimes complemented each other and generated a new basis for analyzing differences among existing democratic regimes.

The quality of democracy concept has also encompassed many diverse dimensions or criteria. The minimum, middle range and maximum conceptualizations of democracy are very helpful for the measurement of democratic quality as well as classification of hybrid regimes. When the democratic criteria (minimum, middle range or maximum) were specified, the analysis of those criteria would be easier. Like democracy conceptualizations, the quality of democracy approach also started with Dahl's Polyarchy criteria. Of course new criteria were also added by different scholars in the quality of democracy literature. For example Altman and Pérez Linán (2001) specified three dimensions of democratic quality as; participation, competition and civil rights;

Diamond and Morlino (2005) took a broader path and specified seven dimensions (rule of law, participation, competition, accountability -both horizontal and vertical-, political equality, civil and political freedoms and responsiveness. They also presented different case studies based on their dimensions (Altman and Pérez Linán, 2001).

While Dahl's criteria of polyarchy determines if a regime is a democratic one or not (at a minimum level), they are not enough for measuring the quality of a democracy on a full scale or comparing two or more developed democracies. Coppedge and Reinicke created the "polyarchy plus scale" (1990: 62) by adding additional criteria to the eight original criteria in order to reach more reliable results about the quality of democracy simply because after the 1990s, democracy started to mean much more than an electoral regime. Thereafter, "polyarchy plus scales" were developed by different scholars (Karl and Schmitter, 1991; Lijphart, 1999; Altman and Pérez Linán, 2001; Beetham, 2004; Diamond and Morlino, 2005 etc.)

In their attempt to develop middle range conceptualizations of democracy, Diamond and Morlino (2005) tried to find an answer to the question of "what is a good democracy? Thus they placed Dahl's minimum criteria of polyarchy to the center of their analysis and added other criteria; accountability, political and civil freedom, popular sovereignty, political equality and good governance (2005: xi). Then they define the lexical meaning of the term of quality with its three different components;

A good democracy is first a broadly legitimated regime that satisfies citizen expectations of governance (quality in terms of result). Second, a good democracy is one which its citizens, associations and communities enjoy extensive liberty and political equality (quality in terms of content). Third, in a good democracy the citizens themselves have the sovereign power to evaluate whether the government provides liberty and equality according to the rule of law (quality in terms of procedure) (2005: xi, xii)

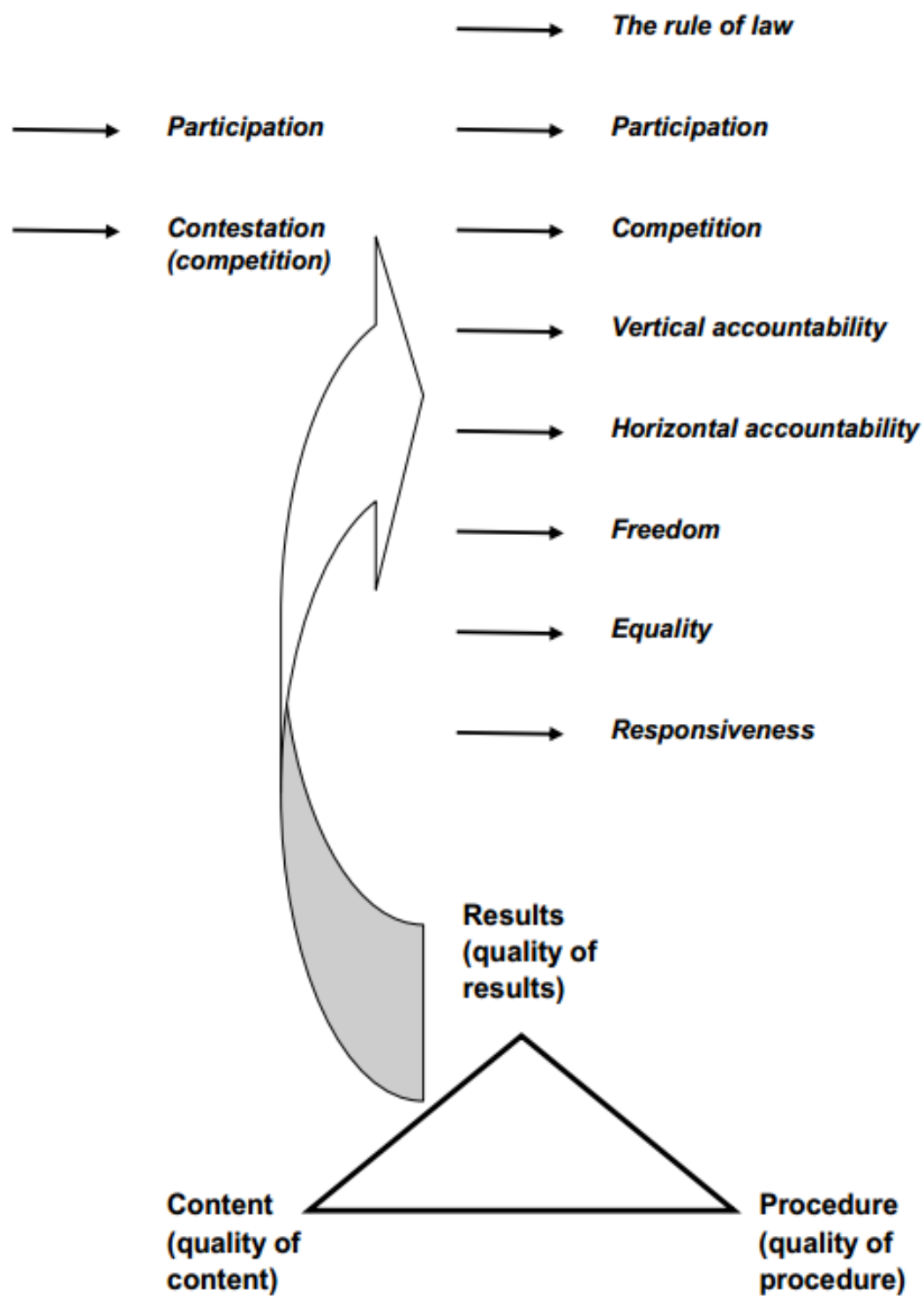


Figure 3: Dimensions for the Measurement and/or Improvement of Quality of Democracy¹³.

¹³ Based on Dahl, 1971; Diamond and Morlino, 2005; and Campbell, 2008: 26

Thus, as Figure 3 illustrates above, for a qualified liberal democracy Diamond and Morlino identified eight dimensions by developing Dahl's minimum criteria. These dimensions are; participation, competition, the rule of law, horizontal and vertical accountability (procedural dimensions), respect for political and civil freedoms, implementation greater political equality and responsiveness (which links procedural dimensions to substantive ones). Scholars analyzed twelve different states' democratic qualities by basing on those criteria and produced new case studies which compare two different states' democratic quality. For example Hagopian (2004) compared Brazil and Chile's democratic quality by using Diamond and Morlino's democratic quality dimensions and concluded that Chile is more democratic than Brazil under these dimensions.

2. 3. Criticisms on the Literature of the Quality of Democracy and Concepts of Democracy:

As mentioned above, the quality of democracy is a relatively new field of study and approaches to democracy analysis. Existing studies on the subject is mostly focusing on *liberal* democracies and their political aspects of democracy while ignoring social aspects of democracy (Diamond and Morlino, 2005; Altman and Pérez Linan 2001; Merkel, Cederman and Bühlmann et al., 2007 etc.). This, however, is criticized by many scholars (O'Donnell, 2004a; Levine and Molina, 2007; Campbell, 2008) because social and economic dimensions have important effects on democratic progress, participation and responsiveness.

The main problem with measuring democratic quality is linking a certain economic system with democratic quality. However, as Levine and Molina put it "linking democracy to a particular economic system could unfairly reduce the chances of polities with leftist parties in government being considered high-quality democracies" (Levine and Molina, 2007: 7). For example, Freedom

House¹⁴ includes “economic freedom” and “private property rights” into the civil liberties dimension. Also “freedom reports of Freedom House correlate too close with foreign policy of US and thus might be biased one-sidedly in favor of US perception of the world” (Campbell, 2008: 16-17). In parallel to these criticisms, it can be contended that assessing the quality of Venezuelan democracy during the presidency of Chávez with the criteria associated with liberal economic model and thus using the data of Freedom House, for example, would not give reliable results. Therefore, in order to avoid this problem, one should turn to those scholars (O’Donnell, 2004; Levine and Molina, 2007; Campbell, 2008) who included social dimension of democracy into their conceptualization of quality of democracy and combined social dimension with political dimension. In his context, Campbell defined an alternative dimension to the politics and equality; *performance of government*, in his Democracy Ranking study (2008: 30). He stated that individuals with more-left political orientations preferred equality while individuals with more-right political orientation had preferences for freedom. So focusing only on freedom or only on equality would conclude biased results. He emphasizes the responsibility of politics for the whole society regardless of the economic system (welfare regime, laissez faire capitalism or mixed economy etc.) of that country (2008: 6).

Then, how one can measure the performance of the government? According to Campbell two dimensions of democracy (political and social) should be included into the measurement of democratic quality and he identifies six variables; political system, economic system, gender equality, knowledge based information society, health system, and environmental sustainability. The quality of politics plus the quality of society constitute the quality of a democratic regime (Campbell, 2008: 33). However political system weighted most (50 percent) in order to emphasize the importance of politics for measuring the quality of democracy while other variables weighted same (10 percent). With this formula,

¹⁴ Freedom House is a US based non-governmental organization and measures the quality of democracy by using two dimensions; political rights and civil liberties and publishes “Freedom in the World Report” every year through <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

Campbell created Democracy Ranking in 2000 and has been publishing Global Democracy Ranking Reports every year since 2005. Figure 4 below illustrates the Democracy Ranking scores of Venezuela from 2008 to 2013 considering developments on political system gender equality, economy, knowledge, health and environmental sustainability dimensions of democracy. According to Pilot Democracy Ranking Report (Campbell and Sükösd 2003: 3) Democracy Ranking Score of Venezuela was 41.38, however according to the 2012 Democracy Ranking Report the score increased to 48.2 (Campbell and G. Pözlbauer et al., 2012). Based on the Figure 4, it is possible to say that nearly all political and socioeconomic dimensions of democracy have been improving from 2008 to 2011 in Venezuela.

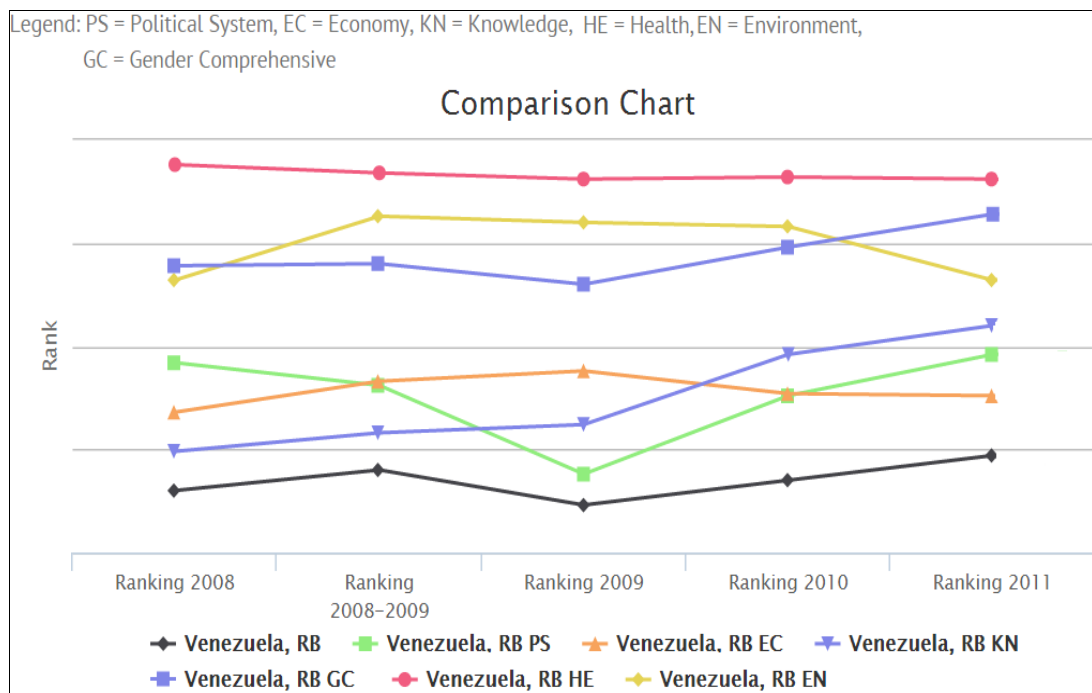


Figure 4: Democracy Ranking Scores of Venezuela from 2008 to 2013¹⁵

As explained, O’Donnell put citizens at the center of the democracy debate as the *main agents*. According to O’Donnell human beings possess three important

¹⁵ Retrieved from <http://democracyranking.org/wordpress/>, date accessed; 01.11.2014

characteristics; autonomy for decision making, a cognitive ability for reasoning and a responsibility for actions (O'Donnell, 2004a:13). By putting individuals at the center of democratic regime, O'Donnell created a new measurement model for democracy by singling out two important aspects of democracy: *human development* and *human rights*. Human development focuses on the basic conditions or capabilities that enable individuals to act (behave) as agents (O'Donnell, 2004a:12-13). In short, human development prepares the socioeconomic infrastructure for citizens to make rational democratic choices. Human development clearly addresses the social dimension of democracy and could be measured through Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Program.

In parallel to human development, human rights are a crucial aspect (especially for constraining state violence) and the complement each other because “without human development; the human rights are more rights and not so much freedoms” (O'Donnell, 2004a: 42). A developed democracy guarantees political rights of its citizens as well as human rights as a result; human development in that democracy would move forward. O'Donnell also sets the democratic criteria for social dimension of democracy as “free and pluralistic information, a legal system which based on a diversity of values, life styles and opinions and a public sphere with a pluralism of debates and discourses” (Campbell, 2008:28). So, it is possible to state that the analyses of both O'Donnell and Campbell on the measurement of quality of democracy are more comprehensive than other measurement methods.

2. 4. Perspectives on the Venezuelan Democratic System under Chávez Administration:

There have been major developments on socioeconomic problems and equality in Venezuela during Chávez presidency, such as the expansion of access to free education and health services, decreasing poverty rates, increasing income equality rates etc. At another level, it has also been argued that Venezuelan

democracy under Chávez presidency was an example of delegative democracy. The decay in the power of institutions providing horizontal accountability in the presidential system and existing structural problems inherited from the previous Venezuelan governments have contributed to de-institutionalization of Venezuelan democracy. As mentioned before, according to O'Donnell, creating the institutional infrastructure for overcoming the socioeconomic problems was necessary; and yet these institutions did not effectively function during the Chávez presidency.

After the collapse of Punto Fijo democracy in Venezuela which lasted for forty years (1958 – 1998), political and economic crisis paved the way for the success of the Chavez movement. Chavez's anti-neoliberal discourse, new radical policies (changing the constitution of Venezuela or reversing the neoliberal policies of former governments) was protested by the opposition groups within the country (mostly former powerful political and business groups). Most of these criticisms targeted the radical discourses of Chávez. Some of the opposition groups even accused Chávez for sharpening class and racial animosities by employing a discriminatory discourse (Cannon, 2004: 298 – 300 and Ellner and Salas, 2007: 112-113). Opponents like Carlos Raúl Hernández and Luis Emilio Randón (former Democratic Action Party leaders) criticized Chávez for exploiting an anti-neoliberal discourse and claimed that Chávez did nothing more than re-implementing conventional economic protectionist practices (Hernández and Randón, 2005: 308). However, the main criticism point was related to the destruction of the Punto Fijo democracy. The forty year term uninterrupted democratic regime in Venezuela came to an end with the election of Chávez with the 1998 Elections. For the first time in forty years, a leader other than representing the parties of the Punto Fijo democracy got elected and his government started to replace old pacted democratic system with a participatory one.

The transformation of the democratic regime raised many questions about Venezuelan democratization process. The expansion and the consolidation of President Chávez's power fueled the concerns about Venezuelan democracy by the domestic opposition as well as international observers. Most of the criticism centered on the further centralization of presidential power (Nelson, 2009; Fürtig and Gratius, 2010; Canache, 2012). The increasing power of the president eliminated the balance of power system and this elimination eroded the horizontal accountability of the elected officials (Ellner, 2008). On the other hand, other scholars viewed developments in the Venezuelan economy and the society under a positive light and drew attention to the relation between these developments and democracy. The decreasing rates of poverty, extreme poverty and inequality within the society since 1998 were very important.

Furthermore, the new constitution introduced a new participatory democratic system. Starting in 1999, community councils were established in every neighborhood; political agendas related to the neighborhoods were discussed and voted on within these councils. The new regime used elections and referendum processes more often. Since 1998 four presidential, four parliamentary, four regional, four municipal elections and six referendums were held in Venezuela. The increasing numbers of elections during the Chávez presidency could be an indication of the populist mobilization policies of President Chávez. (Hawkins, 2009) Other than frequently- held elections and his populist discourse¹⁶, Chávez employed other populist policies and implemented these policies largely with the money coming from the PDVSA, the state-owned petroleum company. After the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq by United States, the oil prices got really high (26\$ per barrel in 2000, 95\$ per barrel in 2008¹⁷) and as a major oil exporter

¹⁶ “You the people are the giant that awoke, I your humble soldier will only do what you say. I am at your orders to continue clearing the way to the greater Fatherland... Because you are not going to reelect Chávez really, you are going to reelect yourselves; the people will reelect the people. Chávez is nothing but an instrument of the people.” (In Hawkins 2009: 1040–41)

¹⁷ Retrieved from the United States Energy Information Administration website; http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=PET&s=F000000_3&f=A date accessed; 31.10.2014

country Venezuela greatly benefited from this development. Venezuelan Gross Domestic Product in current US dollars were 97\$ billion in 1999 and it reached 438\$ billion in 2013¹⁸. The increasing levels of oil revenues were used for President Chávez and his government's populist policies and oil income was redistributed to the lower and middle income groups during his presidency (Kozloff, 2006; Hawkins, 2009).

2. 5. Dimensions for Assessing the Democratic Quality of Venezuela during The Presidency of Hugo Chávez:

Amidst its supporters and detractors, Venezuela went through distinct stages of democratic change since the Punto Fijo period which had been lasted for forty years from 1958 to 1998 (unlike other Latin American countries, an uninterrupted democratic two party system) and the period that followed Hugo Chávez' election as the Venezuelan president. It can be said that even after his death, this period has been extended for another presidential term with the election of his follower Nicolás Maduro.

The uninterrupted Punto Fijo period was often referred to as “the exceptionalism” of Venezuelan Democracy (Ellner and Salas, 2007). Since the mid-1960s, many of Latin American countries' democratic progresses were interrupted by coups and there were no coup attempts in Venezuela (until 1992, the unsuccessful coup attempt of Chávez) unlike other countries in its region. Structurally, the main reason for this was the oil dependent economy of Venezuela and the weakness of landed class against urban bourgeoisie (Karl, 1990: 6). Politically, the elite pacts among contending elites led to the institutionalization of a bi-party competition (Higley and Gunther, 1992) However after the debt crisis of the 1980s, Venezuelan governments started to implement neoliberal packages in order to recover and these austerity policies shook the foundations of the Punto Fijo

¹⁸ Retrieved from data.worldbank.org on 31.10.2014

democracy of Venezuela. During the 1993 elections, the candidate (which used strict anti-neoliberal discourse during his campaign) of a new established party Rafael Caldera (other than the two dominant parties of Punto Fijo period, Democratic Action and Cristian Democrat Party) got elected as president for the first time and this development signaled the collapse of Punto Fijo system. And after his election in 1998, Hugo Chávez came to power and implemented radical policies (from changing Constitution of 1961 to pursuing strict anti-neoliberal and statist economic policies) to the transform of democratic system of Venezuela.

These changes created new debates on the status of Venezuelan Democracy. Some scholars argued that Punto Fijo democracy was institutionalized and that system de-institutionalized by Chávez and his radical policies. While other scholars objected this claim and criticized Punto Fijo democracy for its elitist nature, and other scholars drew attention to the positive socioeconomic developments pursued by Chávez and their effects on the Venezuelan democracy (Ellner, 2008).

The foregoing analysis adopts O'Donnell and Campbell's methodology. In this context, changes in Venezuelan politics and society are analyzed through the combination of political and social dimensions as originally defined by Dahl (1971), and further developed by O'Donnell (2004a) and Campbell (2008). There is a wide range of variables as part of the political and social dimensions (as responsiveness, electoral regime, accountability, political rights, rule of law, direct popular decision making, equality, social rights; freedom, health, education knowledge, gender, environmental sustainability etc.). But using all those different dimensions for assessing the quality of a democratic regime would not be convenient for analysis simply due to its wide range, so choosing the most contested ones is the best approach in the case of Venezuelan democracy. Thus, choosing central dimensions which stood out in the more recent analysis of quality of democracy and of less than full democracies (as in the "embedded

democracy” approach) is more suitable for this study. As already mentioned before, excluding liberal economic dimensions from the measurement of the quality of democracy variables will give more objective results in the case of Venezuelan democracy. While capitalist development to a certain extent is needed for a democratic regime, still the status of the private sector in a state, or privatization/expropriation politics do not heavily affect the democratic regime of a country.

Table 3: Dimensions for Assessing the Modern Venezuelan Democracy under the Chávez Period

Political Dimensions	Social Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socioeconomic Equality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizontal Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Rights

Since the 1998, the fairness of elections, the freedom of expression, media and join political organizations was argued in Venezuela by many different scholars. At the same time the erosion of the institutions of horizontal accountability was one of the most argued topics about Chávez presidency. While noting these adverse political developments and their effects on Venezuelan democratic development, the improvements on equality and socioeconomic welfare and their effects on Venezuelan democratic regime need to be analyzed, too For all these reasons two political and two social and economic dimensions were chosen as vertical and horizontal accountability along with socioeconomic equality and social rights which can be seen from Table 3 above.

Hugo Chávez was mostly accused for being an authoritarian-populist leader and was held responsible for eliminating the process of democratization in Venezuela. An analysis of the electoral process leading to his election and the institutional control mechanisms over his presidency would be necessary from the perspective

of accountability criteria. Electoral regime or vertical accountability refers to polyarchical dimensions as participation in the elections especially the presidential ones and competition between different political parties. Elections (which is free, fair, frequent, competitive) are the basic determinant of a polyarchy. Organizing fair, fair and recurring elections, providing access to multiple source of information to citizens' and higher levels of political tolerance are also integral parts of a democratic electoral regime. Also higher rates of participation, union and political party membership etc. are very important indicators of a democratic regime. The greater interest shown by public creates political consciousness. Reasonably free and fair elections provide a means of vertical accountability but only during election times. On the other hand horizontal accountability provides the control over the government by different institutions between elections such as judicial bodies; independent courts, supreme courts, constitutional tribunals etc.

As O'Donnell and Campbell remind us the social dimensions should be taken into consider as well as the political dimensions because of their effects on democracy. Venezuela has a socialist economy, for this reason dimensions which includes liberal economic principles need to be excluded from the analyses. Including only political aspects of democracy would mean ignoring other important developments in the Venezuelan society since 1998 which promoted democratic quality in the country. For these reasons, socioeconomic aspects of democracy will be analyzed as well as political aspects. Equality mainly contains political equality; all citizens should have equal rights under the law, every citizen should be equal before the law and they also should have an easy access to justice and power. The prohibition of discrimination (on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, political orientation etc.) should be ensured. However, political equality can be fully ensured when social and economic equalities is relatively guaranteed since substantive political equality is linked directly to social and economic equality (Lijphart 1999; Diamond and Morlino, 2005; Rueschemeyer, 2004).As Diamond and Morlino explained;

To enjoy political equality, however citizens must also have some measure of equality in income, wealth and status. The more extreme are social and economic inequalities, the more disproportionate will be power of those who control vast concentrations of wealth and hence their ability to make leaders respond to their wishes and interests (2005: xxvii)

Also a society would become more politically conscious and participative when that society has the greater social rights as the right to mental and physical health, the right to assistance and social security, the right to work and to strike, the right to education, and the right to housing etc. (2005: xxviii). Finally, vertical and horizontal accountability complement each other. Social dimensions relate to substantive nature of democracy. Social dimensions of equality and social rights as; practices on health, knowledge and education all together provide more equal and informed society which in return leads to responsiveness and participation. Human development creates the infrastructure for more informed, well-educated, more equal society, this development in return leads citizens to take more democratic and rational decisions (O'Donnell, 2004a).

To this end, in the following chapters, first, the political history of Venezuela will be reviewed and then the political, social and economic policies of Chávez government will be analyzed by focusing on the political and social dimensions of democracy.

CHAPTER 3:

THE STAGNATION OF VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY: THE DEMISE OF THE OIL ELITES AND RISE OF HUGO CHÁVEZ

After the 1960s, the democratic processes of most of the Latin American countries (LAC) (Chile, Argentina, Peru and Ecuador etc.) were interrupted by military regimes through coup d'états while Venezuelan democracy remained uninterrupted since 1958. This peculiarity separates Venezuela from other Latin American polities. Venezuela has the biggest proven crude oil reserves with 297.74 billion barrels (World Energy Outlook, 2013) which means Venezuela also structurally differs from other LAC by means of rich sources of oil income. Her oil revenues account for about 95 per cent of export earning which shows the importance of oil sector in both economy and politics. Since the date of the beginning of oil drilling in Venezuela (since 1908), oil became the most important factor shaping political struggles. Conflicts among different interest groups (from elites to military) shaped the politics since then.

In the post-independence period, Venezuela had five different republican periods. While the leader of the First Republic was Simon Bolivar, the leader of the Fifth Republic was Hugo Chávez; Bolivarian ideology shaped the new democratic model known as Bolivarian democracy. Bolivar's fully independent and integrated Latin America model and anti-imperialist notions were kept alive by President Chávez and his Fifth Republican Movement (MVR). With the new constitution known as the Bolivarian Constitution of 1999, President Chávez also changed the official name of the country to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. He then introduced the Bolivarian Revolution in 2005.

In order to understand the dilemmas of Venezuelan democratic institutions, it is important to review the legacy of the independence period, the significance of the Punto Fijo era and its bi-party system.

3. 1. From Independence to the Long-Term Rules of Caudillos, 1811 - 1899:

The colonial period of Venezuela started during the 16th century with the exploration of Latin America by Spain. Venezuela was one of the first regions in Latin America to be colonized by Spain and she was one of the first colonies which started the independence movement in Latin America. The Independence War of Venezuela started on April 19th 1810 under the leadership of the Liberator Bolivar and *the First Republican Period* started on July 5th 1811 with the declaration of independence by the first National Congress of Venezuela. Then, the federal government of Venezuela declared the Constitution of 1811 (Hidalgo, 2007). However the First Republican Period did not last long and Spanish colonialists took control over Venezuela again in 1812. *The Second Republican Period* started in 1813 with the victory of Bolivar against Colonialists but this period too did not last long again and ended with the Spanish invasion in 1814. In 1816, Bolivar raised against Spanish colonists and three years later, in 1819 *The Third Republican Period* started, the Republic of Grand Columbia was formed by Bolivar with the intend of forming a Spanish American Unification including the current lands of Venezuela, Ecuador, Columbia, Panama and Peru. However, the regime type of the Grand Columbia was contested. While Bolivar and his supporters braced the central governance, his opposition supported the federal governance. Also there was a dispute between the two parties on the status of slaves. Bolivar promised freedom for slaves who would join his army during War of Independence while his opposition supported slavery (Hidalgo, 2007). While these debates went on, James Monroe, President of the United States of America

(USA) declared Monroe Doctrine¹⁹ in 1823. Because of new “threat”, Bolivar decided to gather all newly independent LAC with the purpose of unification in the Panama Congress of 1826 (Lander and Fierro, 1996). Soon after the Panama Congress, one of the most important generals of the War of Independence; Jose Antonio Páez, started a rebellion against Bolivar (who fought against Spanish colonization in Bolivia at that time) with the intent of establishing an independent Venezuelan republic. He declared the independence of Venezuela from Grand Columbia in 1830.

General Páez was the first caudillo in Venezuela; he stayed in power longest among other Venezuelan leaders. The main aim of Páez was the transformation of Venezuela toward republicanism. However, he adopted indirect democracy which failed to realize his aim and caused the long delay of democracy in Venezuela (Ellner, 1996). After independence two political parties formed; the Conservative Party under the leadership of Páez and the Liberal Party (which includes leftists who supported the land redistribution like Ezequiel Zamora) under the leadership of Guzmán Blanco (also a general). This ideological conflict led Venezuela to the Federal War of 1859 which lasted for four years and ended with the victory of Liberals. However, when Blanco became the President, his liberal ideas (like free elections and media) were put aside. President Blanco pursued nationalist policies, he used his native language in foreign relations which was a first and he also featured national identity and sovereignty. Finally, the numbers of schools during his term increased rapidly and education became compulsory (Ellner, 2008: 31).

From 1830 to the Punto Fijo Pact of 1958, political instability was very dominant in the country. Actually between the years of 1830 and 1899, Venezuela changed presidents for 42 times. During this period Páez became president for three times

¹⁹ “With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere, but with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.” (Monroe, 1823)

(1830 – 1835, 1839 – 1843, 1861 – 1863), and Blanco for six times (1870 – 1873, 1873 – 1877, 1879 – 1880, 1880 – 1882, 1882 – 1884, 1886 -1887). Two generals; Cipriano Castro and Juan Vicente Gómez planned a coup to end this political instability in 1899 and their slogan was “new men, new ideals and new methods”. With the succession of this coup, Venezuela got into a dictatorship period which lasted nearly forty years, until the death of Gómez (Hidalgo, 2007).

3. 2. Venezuelan Governments from 1899 to 1958:

After the coup of 1899, Cipriano became the President until 1908 when Gómez staged another coup against Cipriano and the dictatorship period of Gómez began. During his term the central government became stronger, the first national army was formed and military rebellions came to an end during this period. Political and economic institutions established like ministries of Finance and Treasury but most importantly, oil was drilled for the first time during the presidency of Gómez. Oil revenues mostly were spent for the army, military schools in order to strengthen the army and reinforce the centralization. Even though Gómez known for his nationalist policies, his economic policies were not nationalist at all. On the contrary, during his term oil exploitation and extraction rights had been given to private oil companies (McCoy and Myers, 2004).

Since the beginning of the 20th century, oil has become the main source of income in Venezuela. Even before that century, oil was used by indigenous people for construction or by Spanish colonialists for shipment, however professional extraction of oil and renting the right of oil extraction through concessions by Venezuelan governments, started with Gómez. Gómez granted the first oil concession to British Petroleum Company in 1909 by renting the rights of oil extraction in 12 of 20 districts. In 1911, this concession granted to Caribbean Petroleum Company, and in 1913, Royal Dutch – Shell Company (Ellner, 1996). Until the extraction of oil, the main source of income had been come from

agricultural products (especially coffee). Thus with increasing oil wealth Venezuelan economy became an oil-dependent economy. This created the problem of production in other sectors and made the country more dependent to importation of agricultural products.²⁰.

Against the authoritarian politics of Gómez, Venezuelan writers, artists, opposition elites and opposition caudillos created an anti-Gomestica bloc which known as “Generation of 1928” (Generación del 28). This bloc also included one of the “founding fathers” of Venezuelan democracy; the founder of Democratic Action Party (Acción Democrática, AD) Rómulo Betancourt. The Generation of 1928 formed the ideological base for Venezuelan pacted democracy (Hidalgo, 2007).

After the death of Gómez in 1935, National Assembly (which consisted of deputies who were appointed by Gómez) elected Eleazar López Contreras (1936 – 1941) as president. Despite being a Gomestica, Contreras pursued liberal policies. He limited the presidential term with five years, forbade the re-election of a president for another time, and also he enacted The Labor Law of 1936, which was the first law to provide any real protection for workers, included the right to unionize, bargain collectively, and mandated the eight-hour workday (Nichols, 2010: 140). The first trade union in Venezuelan history formed with this law in 1936, was the Venezuelan Confederation of Workers (Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela, CTV). Lastly during his term, two political parties were formed; The Communist Party of Venezuela (Partido Comunista de Venezuela, PCV) in 1937 and AD in 1941 (Salas, 2005).

After López, Isaías Medina Angarita was elected as President (1941 – 1945) by National Assembly. Medina’s policies were parallel to those of Contreras. Medina

²⁰ The oil dependent economy of Venezuela still exists and more than 30% of Venezuelan GDP consisted of oil revenues in 2010. This data retrieved from data.worldbank.com on August 25th 2014.

“permitted unionization which led the signing of the first collective bargaining agreement in the oil industry in 1945” (Ellner, 2008:41). Most importantly he enacted the Hydrocarbon Law of 1943 which increased the oil revenues of state (Hellinger, 1984: 40).

Despite these positive economic developments, the anti-democratic political regime protested by opposition and in order to constitute a democratic regime, leaders of Movement of 1928 arranged a coup under the leadership of president of AD, Rómulo Betancourt. After the succession of the coup, Betancourt became President until 1948, when the first direct elections in Venezuela were held. During this three year period (trienio in Spanish) political parties, unions and business groups were formed which would direct Venezuelan democracy until 1990s. Christian Democratic Party (Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente, COPEI), The Democratic Republican Union (Unión Republicana Democrática, URD) and The Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce (Federación de Cámaras y Asociaciones de Comercio y Producción de Venezuela, FEDECAMARAS) were all formed in 1946. However, during trienio AD excluded other political groups (like COPEI), business groups (like CTV), Church, former power groups and even part of Venezuelan army. This exclusion policy of Gomesticas made the opposition broader, thus their coup attempt was successful in 1948 (Levine, 1978: 89 – 92).

After the coup of 1948, AD reconsidered its exclusionary policies and then realized that in order to stay in power, a coalition was necessary. This realization was the main reason of the Punto Fijo Pact signed among the elites of AD, COPEI, FEDECAMARAS, CTV and the Church. With the Movement of 1928, the trienio laid the foundations of Punto Fijo Democracy of Venezuela (Baer, 1972).

Trienio ended with a coup led by AD government's Minister of Defense Carlos Chalbaud and General Marcos Pérez Jiménez. After the coup, the junta outlawed AD and PCV. The opposition criticized the pro-US politics of Pérez government while Pérez defended his government by emphasizing his nationalist economy policies like establishing state enterprises (National Electricity Company, Telecommunication Company, Petro-chemistry Company etc.). However his despotic politics against opposition united all opposition groups against him under Junta Patriótica (including AD, COPEI, URD, and PCV) and they staged a coup against Jiménez on January 23rd 1958 and succeeded. With this coup an, uninterrupted democratic period (which will last for forty years) started in Venezuela (Baer, 1972).

3. 3. The Punto Fijo Democracy of Venezuela (1958 – 1998):

Punto Fijo Pact of 1958 was the starting point of the uninterrupted Venezuelan democracy and *the Fourth Republican Period*. After the coup of 1958, three political parties which were excluded from politics during the Jiménez junta, decided to constitute a coalition. However, this coalition of AD, COPEI and URD excluded leftists from their political movement under the effect of Cold War (Ness, 2009). While excluding leftists from the new political system, AD, COPEI and URD incorporated all business groups, trade unions, rural areas and church into their new system which received broad support from the Venezuelan society from bottom to top (Coppedge, 2003).

On October 31st, 1958, three leaders; Rómulo Betancourt (AD), Jóvito Villalba (URD) and Rafael Caldera (COPEI) signed the Punto Fijo Pact and promised to respect political stability, democratic balance and elections etc. Then on December 6th, three leaders again signed the Minimum Program of Government

and formed a cross-party committee and promised to organize a national unity government without party hegemonies²¹.

The “unifying” power of Punto Fijo is well studied by many scholars. According to Levine, responsible party leaders were the key factor of the ensuing democratic stability. The basic ingredient of Venezuela’s success were moderate and responsible leaders, the pacted democracy provided moderates mutual guarantees and incentives to moderation and compromise while its basic principle was “accept and live with diversity” (Levine 1978: 102). However, according to Karl, the key of this coalition was the existence of the oil revenues, and the new middle class factor who controlled these revenues; “The oil economy and the resultant extensive state bureaucracy created opportunities for the middle class, whose representatives play leading roles in favor of political moderation and class conciliation” (Karl, 1987).

The first elections under Punto Fijo Pact were held on January 1958, and AD’s candidate Betancourt won elections by taking 49 per cent of total votes. The first cabinet of Betancourt was composed of two AD, three COPEI, three URD members and four independent members (Tarver and Frederick, 2005:101).

The exclusion of the left from the democratic competition affected Punto Fijo democracy negatively. Before the elections, Betancourt did not express his anticommunist ideas even Cuban president Fidel Castro visited and declared his support to him. However after the elections, Betancourt declared that the development of Venezuela and the communist philosophy were not compatible which disappointed leftists in Venezuela (Tarver and Frederick, 2005:102). In response to this disappointment leftist parties like PCV and The Movement of the Revolutionary Left (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria, MIR which were

²¹ Retrieved from the official site of PSUV; <http://www.psuv.org.ve/temas/noticias/pacto-punto-fijo-suscribio-exclusion-politica-y-represion-como-formas-gobierno/#.U68l92OiI0M> on August 25th 2014.

formed by AD's leftist members after the exclusion of left from Punto Fijo) rebelled against new government, and pro-Jiménez army supported this rebellions. Hence, exclusionary policies of the AD government unified communist groups, eventually these groups created a guerilla movement in order to eliminate Punto Fijo and to create a new communist regime like Cuba. However, Betancourt government took brutal measures against these movements. He continued his anticommunist policies by closing down two left wing parties; MIR and PCV by blaming them for the protests (Ellner, 2008).

Economically, Betancourt implemented protectionist policies just like Pérez, within the framework of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) model including high tax rates. He also tried to increase domestic production and to maximize oil revenues. The main aim was transforming oil revenues to create and support non-oil sectors (especially agriculture) in Venezuela and increasing domestic production. With the Agrarian Reform Law of 1960, the government authorized the state to expropriate land and redistribute land to the rural population (Tarver and Frederick, 2005:104). Betancourt also established the first state-owned petroleum company in Venezuela; Venezuelan Petroleum Company, CVP in order to bring an end to the concession system. During this period Venezuela also played an important role in the establishment of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, OPEC. Lastly, Betancourt government set the Reference Price System which gave Venezuela the right to set the price of oil extracted within their borders. From then on Venezuela set the price of crude oil differently from world oil market. This system led to a substantial increase in Venezuela's oil revenues from 50 per cent to 60 per cent in one year (Coppedge, 2003).

The anticommunist policies of Betancourt's made left more restless, radical but more organized. The Leftist started to leave AD and established their parties like

MIR did in 1960, ARS²² in 1962, MEP in 1967, also URD left the first Punto Fijo coalition (Hidalgo, 2007). While excluding leftists, Betancourt also strengthened AD's power on Venezuelan politics and made Punto Fijo more solid during his presidency. COPEI became closer to AD (ideologically) because of AD's harsh policies on leftists, its interventionist and protectionist economic policies. This closeness rendered future coalitions more easy and functional (Ellner, 2008).

The Second Elections under Punto Fijo held in 1963, and Raúl Leoni (1964 – 1969) from AD elected as the new President. Leoni took nearly the same path as Betancourt, both politically and economically (Ellner, 2008). Fragmentation within the AD while presidential elections were so close made COPEI more advantageous in 1968 elections and Rafael Caldera (1969 - 1974) took 28 per cent of total votes and became the third president of pacted democracy. He also was the first president got elected from COPEI. In short, AD's exclusionist policies made COPEI the ruling party after 1968 elections. Even Caldera came from Falange Movement²³; his past conservative ideas did not affect his presidency. In order to pass law from Chamber of Deputies, COPEI needed alliances and Caldera chose leftist MEP for this coalition (Ellner, 2008:69). Another important event was the establishment of the Movement toward Socialism (MAS) in 1971 with the leadership of Teodoro Petkoff, former guerilla and PCV member.

After Caldera, Carlos Andrés Pérez (AD) became the president with 1973 elections from 1974 to 1979. Pérez's term coincided with the Oil Crisis of 1973. While Arab oil states boycotted the "West", oil prices skyrocketed. Pérez used this prosperity by promoting state interventionism with social welfare programs. Concordantly, his popularity increased with increasing oil incomes²⁴. The Pérez

²² The Revolutionary Nationalist Party Integration (PRIN) mostly known as ARS Group.

²³ Spanish fascist movement started during the 1930s.

²⁴ Pérez's first presidency remembered by Venezuelans as prosperity era and this remembrance made him president again with the 1988 Elections.

government passed the “transformation of the economic structure of nation” law in 1974 and started social reforms immediately. But the most important development was the solid implementation of ISI and nationalization of the iron and oil industry in 1975 and 1976. The State owned Oil Company; Petroleum of Venezuela (PDVSA) was established in 1976 and Pérez founded the Venezuelan Technological Institute of Petroleum in order to maintain the technological independence of Venezuelan oil industry. These investments resulted in huge revenues especially with the effect of Oil Crisis of 1973, within a period of five years, oil prices quintupled. The treasury revenue in 1973 was 3.82 billion USD and in 1974 it was 9.95 billion USD. The increased oil revenues funded agricultural reforms and employment programs. The Government also subsidized the prices of imported goods. Also Pérez government spent more money in five years than all other Venezuelan governments during the previous 143 years combined (Tarver and Frederick, 2005:125) and the result was the rising of external debts.

Luis Herrera Campins (1979 – 1984) won the 1978 elections and became the President after Pérez. Herrera mostly criticized Pérez’s foreign policy and during his presidency, relations with socialist regimes ceased to exist (Ellner, 2008: 78). Just like his foreign policy, Herrera grounded his economic policy on reversing Pérez’s economic policies. He limited state intervention to the economy, reduced protective measures like high tariffs and just like President Pérez he continued to borrow external debts. Thus, during Herrera’s term, external debt nearly doubled and increased to \$40 billion USD²⁵. The declining of oil prices after Oil Boom (nearly 30 per cent from 1980 to 1983) accelerated the inevitable; Venezuelan economy faced with the “Black Friday”. Until February 18, 1983, the Bolívar was the most stable and internationally accepted currency. Before the Black Friday, Central Bank devaluated the currency (Bolívar) and this devaluation caused mass flight of capital and brought in economic crisis called as Black Friday. This crisis further undermined the social support of Herrera and COPEI (Ellner, 2008: 80).

²⁵ Retrieved from; worldbankdata.com on October 25th 2014.

After the economic failure of the Herrera administration, Venezuelans elected the AD candidate Jaime Lusinchi (1984 – 1989) as the President in the 1983 elections by giving him 57 per cent of total votes which was the highest election rate of the Punto Fijo era. However, he could not satisfy the expectations of voters. He continued the economic policies of Herrera. The extent of the informal economy especially under the private sector increased to \$10 billion USD. Also Herrera and Lusinchi were blamed for the 1990s neoliberal measures (implemented by Pérez) and for the increasing corruption rates in the economy during their terms (Ellner, 2008: 81).

These failed economic policies, corruption and clientelism made Venezuelan economy bulky, debt-ridden and depended more and more outside financial resources. Economic policies implemented by Herrera, Lusinchi and then Pérez from 1979 to 1993 paved the way for the Chávista Movement by showing Venezuelans the need for a new political system other than Punto Fijo (Ellner, 2008: 86).

Most of the Latin American countries like Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela etc. went through similar economic processes after the Great Depression and Second World War. They implemented ISI economic growth model based on state-led industrialization, protective statist economy, and nationalization, etc. (Salas, 2005). After the 1973 oil boom, oil exporter countries invested their generous earnings to private banks and parallel to ISI, Latin American countries borrowed foreign debt from these banks for the purpose of increasing state investments and during the 1980s these debts exceed their GDPs and consequently, countries like Mexico and Argentina declared a moratorium. This process affected Venezuela too and the increasing debts led to the economic crisis. In order to overcome the effects of economic crisis, most states chose neoliberal path by measures of the reduction of public spending, privatization of

state enterprises, austerity policies and implementing International Monetary Fund (IMF) recipes (Salas, 2005). Again, the Venezuelan case was no exception.

Carlos Andrés Pérez was elected as president with the 1988 elections and became the President of Venezuela for a second time (1989 – 1993). During his campaign, Pérez had declared the economists on the World Bank's payroll as "genocide workers in the pay of economic totalitarianism" and the IMF as "a neutron bomb that killed people, but left buildings standing"²⁶ However, a few weeks after the elections he declared a neoliberal policy package, which involved privatizing state companies and removing subsidies on fuel and transport and started to implement it immediately. The Telephone Company (CANTV), State Steel Industry (SIDOR) and the Social Security System were immediately privatized. The inflation rate skyrocketed. During the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez inflation rate averaged 45 per cent per year, and during the following term of the next government of Rafael Caldera (1993-1998), it averaged 55 per cent per year. Also GDP decreased from \$58 billion USD in 1988 to \$42 billion USD in 1989 and the rate of unemployment increased 10 per cent during this time, lastly extreme poverty rates increased from 11 per cent to 34 per cent between the years of 1984 and 1991²⁷.

The destructive effects of this neoliberal economic turn to the common people of Venezuela were what lied beneath the *Caracazo Uprising*. On the day of 27th February, 1989 Venezuelans from all over the country started to protest the neoliberal adjustment program and called upon the government to cancel its neoliberal economic package deal. When mass looting started, Pérez government declared the suspension of a raft of constitutional guarantees, started curfew from 6 pm to 6 am and started the imposition of martial law for the following days and

²⁶ Retrieved from; <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/nov/09/1> on September 5th 2014.

²⁷ Data retrieved from; worldbankdata.com on September 5th 2014.

sent all the government forces (like National Armed Forces, Metropolitan Police Force, and the intelligence service of Venezuela DISIP) to re-establish order (Coppedge, 2003). The Caracazo continued to March 10th and thousands of protestors were dead and wounded²⁸. This brutal response to protestors got reaction from all opposing parties, including the military.

The Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement 200 (MBR – 200) formed by Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez Frías in 1982 and attempted at staging coups against government twice on February 4 and November 27, 1992. Both of the coups were unsuccessful; yet the first attempt turned Hugo Chávez into a savior in the eyes of the Venezuelans. These unsuccessful coup attempts paved the way for Pérez's trial for the mismanagement of secret funds, eventually the National Congress (including the votes of AD congressmen) and the Supreme Court decided to prosecute Pérez, he then stepped down from Presidency in May 1993 (Coppedge, 2003).

Eight months later, the 1993 elections were held. Rafael Caldera (1993 – 1998) won the elections for a second time, this time on a different party. Caldera left COPEI and formed National Convergence in 1993, and he used an anti-neoliberal discourse during his campaign supported by leftist parties like MAS, MEP and PCV. Pro-neoliberal parties' votes decreased during this election. During his first years, President Caldera pursued anti-neoliberal policies like intervening the economy by implementing form of controls on interest rates and foreign currency exchange rates. He objected privatization. However, after an economic crisis in the banking sector, his anti-neoliberal policies came to an end. Eighteen banks went into bankruptcy and the government took over their administration. Inflation increased again by reaching 62.2 per cent in 1994 and 115.5 per cent in 1996. Caldera made an agreement with IMF, received a loan of \$1.4 billion USD from IMF and started to implement the “Venezuela Agenda” which introduced strict

²⁸ “The official count of those killed and wounded by firearms during the Caracazo was 277 and 1009, respectively, but other estimates placed the death count above 2000” (Ellner, 2008: 95).

neoliberal measures. This meant the re-launching of the privatization policies. The oil company PDVSA was also opened to partial privatization under the “Oil Opening Program”. Caldera also started to modify the existing social security system and changed Labor Law (Ellner, 1996).

There have been two dominant views on Venezuela’s pacted democracy. According to one side (which is supported by Levine (2002), Karl (1987) and Hawkins (2009) etc.) the 1958 -1998 period was an exceptional democratic example since there were no military governments or successful coups during this time and elections were periodic without fraud. However, the other side (which is supported by Ellner (2008); McCoy and Myers (2004) etc.) considered the Venezuelan exceptionalism thesis as a “myth”. It was argued that Punto Fijo enabled the ossification of the decision making process by elites because pacted democracy was simply an agreement between elites of AD and COPEI. The oil income shared by these elite groups; including military and the church elites, thus possible conflicts between these groups eliminated and the pacted democracy continued for forty years without interruption (Ellner, 2008).

CHAPTER 4

THE ELECTORAL VICTORIES OF HUGO CHÁVEZ AND THE ROAD TO BOLIVARIAN DEMOCRACY

The importance of Hugo Chávez's presidency lies in the far reaching changes carried out in the economic and political system of Venezuela during the period of 1998-2012, these changes ranged from the official name of the country to the Constitution, from the electoral system to the economic system with significant changes in many institutions by the MVR. While the 1998 Elections were crucial, it was the New Constitution of Venezuela and the 2000 Elections –known as the Mega Elections of 2000 which transformed the Venezuelan democracy. With these developments, President Chávez laid the legal foundations for the transition from a pacted and representative democracy to participatory democracy.

President Chávez also reversed the neoliberal policies of the preceding Venezuelan government with the anti-neoliberal law package of 2001 (which went into effect after 2004). The new socialist path of the Chavista movement received various reactions from the different parts of the society and this path cost President Chávez to lose an election for the first time in 2007. After this defeat, he formed a new political party with a distinct socialist agenda. Until his unexpected death in 2013, all his social and economic policies (as nationalizing the petroleum, electricity, telecommunication companies, steel industry etc. and increasing social funding for the poorer parts of the society) were consistent with his objective of establishing the 21st Century Socialism in Venezuela.

4. 1. The Origins of the Bolivarian Democracy of Venezuela:

The origins of the Bolivarian Democracy can be traced back to the 1970s when Hugo Chávez decided to form the Liberation Army of the Venezuelan People²⁹ to proceed with the formation of the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement 200 (MBR 200)³⁰ within the army (McCoy and Myers, 2004). While the Liberation Army was formed as a discussion group and had an ideological characteristic, the MBR 200 was formed with more practical objective, i.e. with the purpose of replacing the existing democratic system with a new one. As Chávez stated:

What has been calling the democratic system in Venezuela has not differed much in recent years from what come before: Everything has basically remained same; it's been the same system of domination, with a different face – whether it's that of General Gómez or of Rafael Caldera. Behind this figure, this caudillo, with a military beret or without it, it's been the same system – in economies and in politics – the same denial of basic human rights and of the right of the people to determine their own destiny (Gott, 2005: 38)

The MBR 200 took action for replacing the old system with a new one on February 4th, 1992 through an abortive coup lieutenant colonel Chávez was imprisoned for a year until President Caldera took power in 1993; then he pardoned Hugo Chávez and the others who were involved in the coup. After his release, Chávez started to look for political support and met with the representatives of the three major leftist parties of Venezuela; MAS, PCV and MEP. He wanted to turn MBR 200 into a political movement; with this purpose, on July 1997 Chávez founded the Fifth Republic Movement³¹ (MVR) in memory of Simon Bolivar and his republican movements. After the establishment of the

²⁹ Ejército de Liberación del Pueblo de Venezuela

³⁰ Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario – 200,

³¹ Movimiento Quinta Republica

MVR, Chávez started his campaign for the 1998 Presidential Elections, supported by a leftist coalition, the Patriotic Pole³² (formed by MEP, PPT³³, MAS and PCV). None of the pro-neoliberal candidates or Pacted Democracy parties had the chance in the elections. Only two anti-neoliberal candidates won 95 per cent of total votes in the 1998 Elections which showed the effects of neoliberal packages implemented by the Punto Fijo regime during early 1990s. Henrique Salas Römer (former COPEI member) who formed the Project Venezuela Party in 1998 took 39 per cent of total votes, while Hugo Chávez took 56 per cent of the total valid votes and became the president on February 2nd, 1998 (Ellner and Hellinger, 2004).

President Chávez's first term lasted less than two years because of the changes in the democratic system of Venezuela. This term was a transition period, a transition from Punto Fijo democracy to Bolivarian Democracy. Chávez's early acts were drafting a new constitution and the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. These were political rather than economic acts and he pursued more moderate policy towards his opponents. The obvious example of this moderation period was the minister of finance; Maritza Izaguirre. He was in the same position before Chávez administration and had put forward neoliberal policy proposals. This moderation did not mean decreasing polarization; on the contrary, since 1998 the Venezuelan political party system took another turn with increasing bipolarization; Pro-Chavismo (MVR, MAS, PPT and PCV) vs. Puntofijistas (AD, COPEI, Project Venezuela, FEDECAMARAS and Justice First) (Coppedge, 2003: 184-185).

The National Constituent Assembly of Venezuela was formed after the 1999 Elections via referendum. The Constituent Assembly's main responsibility was drafting a new constitution. The Assembly held the supreme power above all the

³² Polo Patriótico

³³ Fatherland for All, Patria Para Todos (PPT), fraction of La Causa R

political institutions. Elections for the Constituent Assembly were held three months later and resulted in the victory of MVR (they won 125 of 131 seats of the Assembly). After this election, the period of drafting the new constitution started. The referendum on the new constitutional draft (written by the Constituent Assembly) was held in 1999. The Bolivarian Constitution of Venezuela was approved by 72 per cent of the voters who went to the polls. With this constitution most of the Puntofijista remnants were wiped off by the Chávez administration. The term of President of the Venezuela was extended from five to six years: The re-election of the president became possible only for two-terms and recalling the elected officials including the president via referendum became possible. The new constitution converted the existing legislative bicameral structure (Senate and Chambers of Deputies) with a unicameral one: the National Assembly with a membership of 165 members elected for a five -year term was created Also voter's ballot machines changed with the technologic ones (Gott, 2005: 146). All in all, it was clear that this two year period was a preparation period (by setting the stage with political reforms) for the prospective radical changes.

4. 2. “The Mega Elections of 2000” and the New Political System of Venezuela:

Hugo Chávez's anti-neoliberal economy policies came into being fully during his second term in presidency (2001 – 2007) after his administration established the legal and political bases for them. The 2000 Elections were held at the presidential, parliamentary, regional and local levels. In the Presidential election, held on July 30th, there were three candidates, Hugo Chávez from MVR, Francisco Arias Cárdenas³⁴ from Radical Cause and Claudio Fermín from National Encounter³⁵. Chávez won this election by winning 59.8 per cent of the

³⁴ Cárdenas was a military officer and a member of MBR – 200 but after the ratification of 1999 Constitution which he did not support, he left MVR.

³⁵ Encuentro Nacional was the official name of the party and Fermín founded it in 2000.

total valid votes cast. National Assembly elections were held on the same day. The MVR again won the majority of the seats in the assembly by taking 44.38 per cent of total votes. The AD got 16.11 per cent, Project Venezuela got 6.94 per cent and COPEI got 5.10 per cent of total votes. Regional and municipal elections were held for the governorships and mayor ships and resulted in the victory of MVR. The leftist coalition MVR took 14 of the 23 governorships while AD and COPEI could win only 4 governorships (Ellner, 2008).

After the 1998 Elections, if drafting the new Bolivarian constitution was the first step toward changes in the Venezuelan democracy, the second step would be the Mega Elections, because all democratic, political and economic institutions (in all levels) changed hands in favor of President Chávez and MVR. The turning point of the contemporary Venezuelan democracy started with the announcement of forty nine anti-neoliberal decrees by President Chávez in 2001 (McCoy and Myers, 2004). These laws targeted the 1990s neoliberal adjustments, the aim was reversing them and taking Venezuela into an anti-neoliberal path. This package included the changes in the oil industry, agricultural production and fishery industry etc. The Organic Hydrocarbon Laws gave government the larger share of the PDVSA and increased the amount of the oil revenues that the government could get; with this law, private oil companies were obliged to pay higher taxes. The Land Law aimed at a redistribution of lands in Venezuela, and increasing the agricultural production in Venezuela in order to provide food security. Another important law was about the social security system of Venezuela; all privatization attempts by former governments were considered invalid and full expropriation of the social security system was ensured.

In effect, these laws sharpened the existing political polarization in Venezuela. Neoliberals, Puntofijistas, or moderate Chavistas (like MAS), and other opposition parties formed an alliance (known as Democratic Coordination) against these anti-neoliberal measures. The most significant development was the

incorporation of the business groups in this alliance like FEDECAMARAS and CTV which had an important role in the General Strike of PDVSA and the 2002 Coup attempt against President Chávez. The Organic Hydrocarbon Law, Land Law and Fishery Law fueled the concerns on the private property rights by middle and upper classes. Also the state expropriation of the oil industry in Venezuela created a clash of interest between the government and powerful economic groups (Ellner, 2008:114). Still, the Chavistas continued to support the anti-neoliberal measures. On the grounds that these measures had a democratizing effect on the Venezuelan society

However, the reaction of the opposition block against the 49 Law Package was immediate. After the announcement of the package in November 2001, FEDECAMARAS and CTV called a general strike (which affected PDVSA and oil production severely) against Chávez administration and his anti-neoliberal policies in December 2001. In return, the Chávez government replaced the seven top directors of PDVSA in February 2002. The anti-Chávez bloc then called for a second general strike which would later lead the coup attempt against Chávez on April 11th, 2002; On April 11 the army declared that Chávez had resigned from his position and that he had been taken into military custody (Penfold, 2004). Pedro Carmona, as the president of FEDECAMARAS and a military leader, assumed the head of the interim government and dissolved the Assembly and the Supreme Court while abolishing the 1999 Bolivarian Constitution. Two days later with the support of the air forces and pro-Chávez Venezuelans, Chávez returned to his presidency and declared that "there will be no witch hunts, no persecution, and no disrespect for free expression or thought³⁶". After the coup attempt, only six senior military officers were officially charged in the coup deposed and then reinstated (Golinger, 2006).

³⁶ Retrieved from; <http://www.economist.com/node/1085743> on November 1, 2014

In August 2002, President Chávez called for a negotiation with the Democratic Coordination, and with the initiatives of Organization of American States (OAS), the Carter Center and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A commission formed known as the Presidential Commission for National Dialogue³⁷. At first, Democratic Coordination group distanced themselves from the negotiation process and called for a general strike (which lasted two months) with the aim of forcing the president out of power in December 2002 (Ellner, 2008: 119). However, when the strike started to unravel during February 2003, the Democratic Coordination started to take the negotiation process seriously and they demanded a recall election³⁸ for removing Chávez from the presidency. The government accepted the offer of opposition and the recall elections held on August 15th, 2004 and resulted with the victory of Hugo Chávez again (with nearly 60 per cent of total votes). After the results were announced, the opposition bloc objected the results but after the validation of the recall election by OAS, the Carter Center and other international institutions, the Democratic Coordination bloc dropped of the accusations of fraud in the election. Soon after the recall election, on October 31st 2004, the regional elections were held for electing 22 governors. The MVR succeeded again by taking 20 of 22 governorships. All of these electoral victories encouraged Hugo Chávez and his government to pursue more radical policies. However, prevailing political instability from 2001 to 2003 negatively affected the economy to a considerable extent and the recovery process started with the end of the general strike in February 2003 (Rodríguez, 2008:53).

As Figure 5 illustrates, with the effect of two year political instability in the country, amount of real per capita GDP met with a sudden decrease by the first

³⁷ Entitled "Support for the Process of Dialogue in Venezuela," the resolution also gave the OAS a clear mandate to continue its collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Carter Center and move immediately on initiatives to encourage dialogue towards national reconciliation in the South American country. (Retrieved from; http://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-165/02 on November 1, 2014

³⁸ Recall elections were made possible by the 1999 Constitution: which stated that all magistrates and other offices filled by popular vote are subject to revocation, Article 72.

quarter of 2003. In fact, during 2002 and 2003, “GDP was down by 24.9 per cent. At the same time, poverty rate increased from 41.5 per cent to 54 per cent, (Weisbrot, 2005:52). In other words, due to the big amount of capital flights, general strike and political instability, Venezuelan economy had lost one quarter of its GDP and the inflation rate quadrupled from 10 per cent in 2001 to over 40 per cent in 2003. Despite this economic downfall, Chávez stayed in power and after he won the new elections, he introduced a socialist Economic Model with the new legislation including Organic Hydrocarbon Law, Land Law and Fishery Law. Meanwhile, new social mission programs were launched providing free education, health care, housing services etc. for Venezuelans with the support of the oil income of the now state- owned oil company, PDVSA (Ellner and Hellinger, 2004).

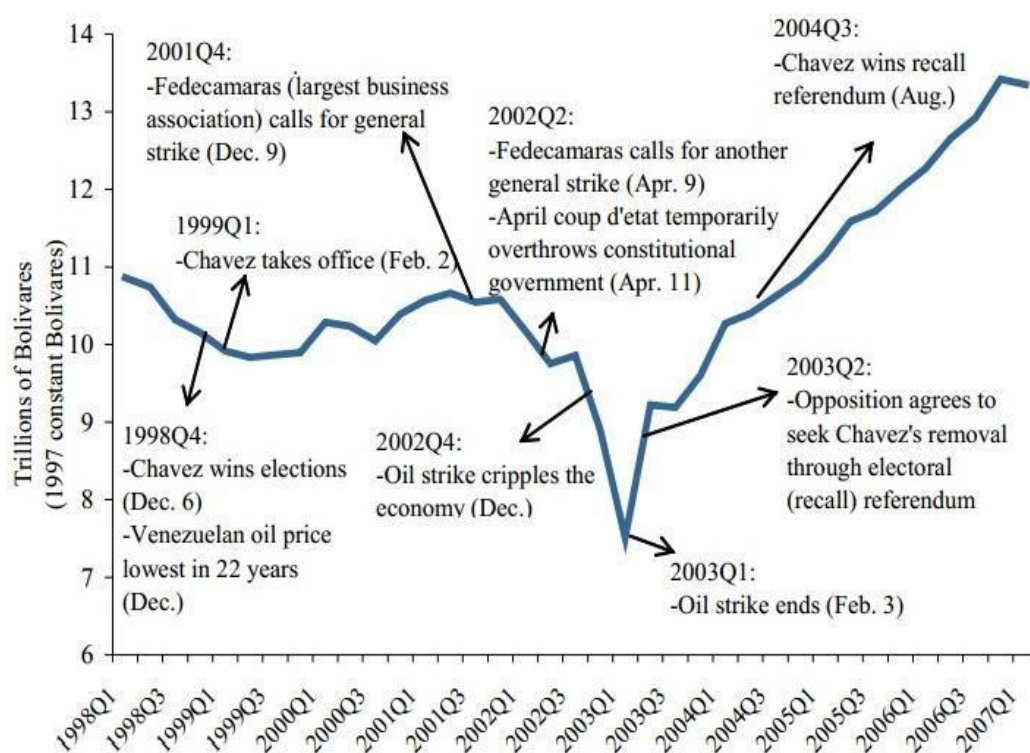


Figure 5: Real Per Capita GDP (seasonally-adjusted)³⁹

³⁹ Weisbrot, 2007: 7

4. 3. The New Economic Model and 21st Century Socialism after 2004:

After the electoral victory, the Chávez administration set out to implement the 49 Laws Package reversing the neoliberal measures of the 1990s. Also President Chávez started to use a strong anti-neoliberal and socialist rhetoric. Firstly, the expropriation process began; CANTV (the largest telecommunication company in Venezuela), SENECA (electric company), SIDOR (steel company), Aeropostal Airlines were all nationalized. The Chávez administration also introduced a strict tax law⁴⁰. Then, the government announced the expropriation of those companies which were left by the owners and took over by workers during the general strike and let these workers to run these nationalized companies. Just before the recall elections of 2004, the government initiated a new program, called the missions with the objective of reducing poverty rates, eliminating illiteracy and improving the health of the Venezuelan people. These missions started to provide free healthcare services (The Barrio Adentro Mission), free education (Robinson Mission, Mission Ribas, Mission Sucre etc.) low-priced housings (Great Housing Mission), land redistribution (Mission Zamora) and discounted food through state-owned markets for low income groups (The Mission Mercal) etc. From 2004 to 2013, the fiscal contribution of PDVSA to the social missions reached 208 billion US dollars⁴¹ (Weisbrot, Ray, and Sandoval, 2009: 17).

The increasing amount of social spending by the state had positive effects on voters. While excluding Puntofijista elites from power, Chavismo started to incorporate the citizens to national politics actively. This was one of the main reasons of the increasing support for Chávez through the years. The parliamentary elections of 2005 and the Presidential elections of 2006 resulted with the victory of Hugo Chávez. The MVR won 114 of 165 seats of the National Assembly in

⁴⁰ This tax law enabled punishing the companies for evading tax, with fines via the federal Integrated National Service for Customs and Tax Administration (SENIAT).

⁴¹ Retrieved from <http://www.elcambur.com.ve/poder/6-millones-de-barriles-de-petroleo-diarios-es-la-meta-de-pdvsa-para-2019> on November 25th 2014.

2005. Chávez (MVR supported by Podemos, PVC, MEP, PPT, UPT etc.) won 62.8 per cent of total votes while his opposition Manuel Rosales (COPEI, UNT, Justice First, URD, MAS etc.) won 36.9 per cent of total votes⁴². His another six-year -term presidency thus started in 2006. These electoral victories encouraged President Chávez for pursuing more radical policies and moving the Bolivarian Revolution to a more explicit socialist path after 2004 (Ellner, 2008: 109).

The 21st Century Socialism concept was introduced by Dieterich in 2000⁴³. The main aim of the Socialism of the 21st Century was solving poverty, illiteracy, sexism, racism, hunger etc. by promoting participatory democracy (Lebowitz, 2006). President Chávez's political acts had many common points with the 21st Century Socialism, especially focusing on reducing poverty and promoting the tools of participatory democracy. President Hugo Chávez used the 21st Century Socialism concept for the first time in the 5th World Social Forum⁴⁴:

We have to re-invent socialism. It can't be the kind of socialism that we saw in the Soviet Union, but it will emerge as we develop new systems that are built on cooperation, not competition. It is impossible, within the framework of the capitalist system to solve the grave problems of poverty of the majority of the world's population. We must transcend capitalism. But we cannot resort to state capitalism, which would be the same perversion of the Soviet Union. We must reclaim socialism as a thesis, a project and a path, but a new type of socialism, a humanist one, which puts humans and not machines or the state ahead of everything (Chávez, 2006)

While President Chávez increased his popular support elections after elections (the Presidential Elections of 2006 had the best turnout rates within the all

⁴² Retrieved from the official website of National Electoral Council of Venezuela on November 25th 2014; http://www.cne.gob.ve/divulgacionPresidencial/resultado_nacional.php

⁴³ See; Lebowitz, 2006.

⁴⁴ Retrieved from <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/907> on November 25th 2014.

Venezuelan elections were ever held), he became more radical and started to pursue more radical policies. In one of his speeches (right after he got re-elected as the President), he declared his plans for holding a referendum for promoting 21st Century Socialism and changing specific articles of the Bolivarian Constitution related to removing the presidential term limits, a new enabling act for the president, eliminating the autonomous status of Central Bank, creating new communal assemblies at local levels, reducing weekly working hours, expanding social security rights to the workers in the informal economy etc. In short, this referendum would move Chavismo from populism to socialism with the planned five different steps or “constituent motors” --as President Chávez named them; these motors in return would build the necessary stage for the establishment of 21st Century Socialism (Ellner, 2011: 422).



Figure 6: The Five Constituent Motors of 21st Century Socialism⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Retrieved from http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/2890#_ftn1 on November 26th 2014.

As can be seen from the Figure 6 above; the first constituent motor was the “Enabling Law”; this motor would create the direct road towards socialism. The second constituent motor was changing certain parts of the 1999 Constitution thus establishing socialist rule of law. The third constituent motor was reforming Venezuelan society via socialist education means. The fourth constituent motor was "The New Geometry of Power," and included reorganization of the nation's political structure. Lastly, the fifth constituent motor was “the Explosion of Popular Power” and this would lead Venezuela to a socialist democracy.

These declared radical, socialist policies instigated intense debates in the society and this time the opposition was expanded further especially following with the government’s new decision to revoke the license of the one of the biggest television channel in Venezuela; RCTV, just before the elections. Government was accusing RCTV of supporting the 2002 coup. Thereafter, opposition parties, university students and even parts of the Chavista Block (including one of the founding members of MBR 200 and former Minister of Defense of Chávez government; General Raúl Isaías Baduel) took a stand against this new referendum on the issue of the abolition of the presidential term limits and expanding the executive powers of the President. Another issue was that although President had openly promised to fight with corruption during his first presidential speech in 1999 and he had not kept his promise. In fact, corruption levels increased over the years fueling the disappointment of the wider range of opposition arranged a very successful anti-referendum campaign and President Chávez lost the elections in 2007 for the first time. After losing the elections he made a speech no one was expecting. Before the elections President Chávez named his opponents as traitors, however, right after the elections he congratulated the opposition for their success. The tone of his speech was calm in which he said that, “I prefer that things ended as they did (...) we are built for a

long battle as I said on February 4th 1992, we haven't been able to win, for now⁴⁶” (Corrales and Penfold, 2011: 30-31).

The ideological disputes in the Fifth Republican Movement (MVR) led President Chávez to establish a new political party under the name of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela⁴⁷ (PSUV) in 2007. PSUV was mainly formed with the socialist bloc of the MVR. In 2008, local elections were held in Venezuela for two metropolitan mayors and twenty two governors. The new Chavista block got into elections under the PSUV and won this election even though they lost in five districts including the capital, Caracas. In particular, President Chávez lost Sucre which was the poorest district in Venezuela; this showed the decreasing support of the Chavista movement even in poorer districts. The fairness of the elections was also disputed. Before the 2008 local elections were held, more than 400 pro-Chávez and opposition politicians (200 were opposition candidates) were banned from the elections because of the corruption charges brought by the Comptroller General Clodosvaldo Russián. Venezuelan Supreme Court ratified the candidate disqualifications as constitutional in 2008. This was interpreted as an act of the oppression of the opposition. In return, the government defended itself through its commitment to the fight against corruption. Former Minister of Defense Baduel, Mayor of Maracaibo Manuel Rosales, and Mayor of Caracas Antonio Ledezma were accused of corruption. Baduel was sent to prison after his trial; Rosales stepped down from the office and Ledezma's mayoral administrative tasks were restricted by the National Assembly in 2009.

The 2007 electoral defeat was very crucial to President Chávez because the term limits for the President could not be abolished with the 2007 Referendum and this was closing the path for President Chávez' re-election. Thus, President Chávez arranged a new referendum in 2009, on abolishing the term limits for all elected

⁴⁶ Retrieved from <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/2989> on November 25th, 2014.

⁴⁷ Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela

officers. In the referendum 54 per cent of total voters approved the suggested elimination of term limits. The voter turnout rate was about 70 per cent, higher than the ones in former elections. With this referendum, Venezuela became the only presidential democracy abolishing term limits for the president in the whole continent and this made the status of the Venezuelan democracy more disputable (Corrales and Penfold, 2011: 35-37).

After the 2009 Referendum, President Chávez contested three more elections until his death on March 5th 2013; the parliamentary elections in 2010, the local elections in 2012 and lastly the presidential elections in 2012 and he again won all these elections. The voter turnout rates were per cent66 in 2010 parliamentary elections which was the highest voter turnout rates of parliamentary elections since the 1993 Elections. PSUV got 48.2 per cent of total votes and 96 seats of total 165 seats in the National Assembly. Even though PSUV took the majority vote by taking just over one percent more against the Coalition for Democratic Unity⁴⁸ (MUD), according to first-past-the-post voting system PSUV got the majority of the seats in the assembly while MUD took 64 of total seats⁴⁹. Two years later, the Presidential elections were held on October, 2012 and the local elections were held on December, 2012. The 2012 Presidential elections had the highest voter turnout rates since the 1988 Presidential Elections. It was over per cent80. Hugo Chávez again won by taking the majority vote; over 55 per cent while his opposition Henrique Capriles from Justice First (supported by MUD) took 44 per cent of total votes. Similar to the Presidential Elections, the local elections too resulted in favor of PSUV and Chavista movement won 20 governorships (two districts more than the 2008 Local Elections). This was the last Election Chávez won until his death following his three months' term in his forth presidential term

⁴⁸ MUD was formed in 2008 by the opposition parties of the government like COPEI, AD, PODEMOS, MAS, The Radical Cause, and Justice First etc. Former cooperation called Democratic Coordination collapsed after the 2004 recall elections.

⁴⁹ Previous Parliamentary Election was held in 2005 and the opposition boycotted the election thus MVR won 114 of total 165 seats and voter turnout rates were about 25%.

There are two major strands of arguments on the Chávez era. According to Ellner, Chávez Presidency involved five different stages and did not go along with a linear line. The first stage was the moderate stage and it lasted only for two years, from 1999 to 2001. The second stage started with the famous 49 anti-neoliberal law packages and Chavista movement started to behave as itself more; however, these packages blocked by the opposition via coup attempt in 2002 and general strikes in 2002-03. In 2004, when Chávez won the recall elections the third stage began and Chavista movement adopted a new economic model. The fourth stage started with the 21st Century Socialism and nationalization of the basic industry. Last stage lasted from 2009 to 2011 during which the state started to expropriate many different companies for competing with the private sector (Ellner, 2013: 64). According to Ellner, President Chávez only could start to pursue his ideas after the third stage, before that there was a clash between the former elite and new Chavista bloc. According to Ellner unlike Cuba, there was a democratic system in Venezuela and that the state did not completely dismantle the private sector and dominated the economy as in Cuba. Therefore, President Chávez's anti-neoliberal ideas and politics should not be approached with biased ideas mostly supported by the United States. Ellner claimed that since 2001 (when the President Chávez declared the anti-neoliberal law package) the US had been trying to overthrow Chavista Bloc from the power by supporting the opposition to reintroducing neoliberal policies into Venezuela (Ellner, 2008).

The second strand of the argument on the Chávez era was summarized by Corrales and Penfold; the Chávez Period pursued a linear line and got more autocratic over the years without any democratization attempts during those years. The cases in point were the promulgation of the new constitution in 1999 and the formation of National Constituent Assembly, followed by the increase in the state control over the economy which undermined the private sector. Lastly, the term limits for the elected officials were revoked and a hyper-presidential hybrid political system established in Venezuela: Meanwhile, clientelism reached

very high levels. All of these developments considerably undermined the democratic quality of the Venezuelan political system (Corrales and Penfold, 2011).

CHAPTER 5

VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY UNDER THE CHAVEZ PRESIDENCY: HOW THE PROCEDURAL AND SUBSTANTIVE DIMENSIONS INTERACT

The status of Venezuelan democracy has been intensely debated by Venezuelan and outside observers, scholars and politicians since the beginning of the Chávez Presidency. As explained in the preceding chapters of this thesis, the Punto Fijo democracy was largely seen as an exceptional case among the other Latin American countries; however, the dynamics of the bi-party system and in particular, the AD's domination of politics, the elite's superiority in the decision-making process and the limited number of winning political parties sparked debates regarding the status of the democratization process. At the end of the Punto Fijo pact, power in Venezuelan politics changed hands in favor of Hugo Chávez. Thus, at this time, the debate over Venezuela's democratization process moved to assessing the quality of the Venezuelan democracy.

During the Chávez Presidency, there were four presidential elections (1998, 2000, 2006 and 2012), and there were four legislative elections (1998, 2000, 2005 and 2010). During his first term (1999 – 2000), Chávez began to implement new policies (such as drafting a new constitution), as discussed in Chapter 4. In other words, during his second term (2001 – 2006), Chávez had a legal basis for his political agenda. However, after he was re-elected as President in 2000, he launched radical political and economic changes called the “49 Laws Package” (including nationalization of the electricity and telecommunication companies, greater state control over the economy and the PDVSA). During this term, the

power struggle between the Chavistas and the Puntofijistas became more prominent. In response to the Chavistas' anti-neoliberal policies, a general strike was called against the new government by business groups and trade unions (FEDECAMARAS and CTV) in 2001 that resulted in severe economic consequences. Furthermore, the opposition attempted an unsuccessful coup against the President in April 2002, called another strike in 2003, and finally demanded a recall referendum that was decided in favor of Chávez in 2004. After this referendum success, Chávez started to implement the anti-neoliberal measures that were drafted back in 2001. His third (2007 – 2011) and fourth (2012 – 2013) terms consisted of implementing policies to establish 21st Century Socialism. These anti-neoliberal and socialist policies inflamed the debates on the quality of the Venezuelan democracy, and the “negative” effects of these anti-neoliberal policies were debated by many scholars. President Chávez was characterized as a populist authoritarian leader and was accused of interrupting Venezuela's democratization process. However, it should be noted that most of these claims were based on a liberal economic understanding. According to these arguments, the status of the private sector in the Venezuelan economy affected the quality of Venezuelan democracy; however, there are no moot aspects of the impact of economic systems on democratic quality. President Chávez's participatory democracy model must be discussed instead of the type of the economic system implemented in Venezuela. This participatory democracy model was very different from the Puntofijista-favored representative democracy. As Ellner noted;

According to Chávez the definition of a representative democracy was too narrow and a broader definition would be possible with model of participatory democracy, accordingly under the new Bolivarian Constitution, Venezuelan society defined as “democratic, participatory and protagonist society”. Thus Chávez put organized or unorganized popular sector to the center of his policies (Ellner, 2006).

Thus, analyzing the impact of the participatory democracy model introduced by President Chávez on the democratic system in combination with the impacts of

the non-liberal economic reforms is likely to provide us with a more complete picture. Therefore, in this chapter, the procedural and substantive dimensions of a democratic regime (focusing on the electoral regime, horizontal accountability, equality and social rights) will be evaluated in the context of the political, economic and social policies of the Chávez administration and the Fifth Republican Movement. The contention here is that both of these dimensions have interacted with the economic reform process and that the relationship between these procedural and substantive dimensions is ultimately important to evaluating the extent of progress or retreat in the quality of Venezuela's democracy over the fifteen-year period.

5. 1. Vertical Accountability through the Electoral Process

The term electoral democracy mainly refers to the existence of free, fair and competitive recurring elections as Dahl defined in *Polyarchy* (1971). Competitive elections call for the inclusion of all the adult citizens in the right to vote (universal suffrage), and a genuine competition among rival candidates for national office. In this section, the electoral regime of Venezuela during the Chávez administration will put under scrutiny as it relates to the political aspects of democracy (as part of the vertical accountability dimension) to assess the fairness, competitiveness of the electoral process.

5.1.1. The Quality of the Electoral Regime of Venezuela during and after the 1998 Elections:

Since the Punto Fijo Pact (1958), elections in Venezuela have been held regularly, once in every five years for presidential elections until 2000. However, under the new Bolivarian Constitution of Venezuela, presidential term of office was extended to six years. Since 2000, presidential elections were held every six years,

and legislative elections were held in every five years. A new technological ballot system was introduced in the 1998 Elections to prevent the traditional source of fraud⁵⁰ in Venezuela. Lastly universal adult suffrage is guaranteed under the new constitution (Article 64⁵¹) and free participation to the elections and public affairs as voters or candidates is legally guaranteed (Article 62⁵²).

The 1998 Elections (both presidential and parliamentary) were the first elections in Venezuela to be held under the supervision of international observers- the Organization of American States (OAS), the US based the Carter Center and the International Republican Institute (IRI). The invitations came directly from the National Electoral Council⁵³ (CNE) and the leaders of all political parties in Venezuela. Also, during the 1998 elections a new electronic system was introduced by The CNE; the world's first nationally integrated electronic network to count and transmit the votes to the central headquarters which reduced the possibility of fraud during elections. Under these changes, firstly the legislative elections were held on November 8th 1998. AD got the majority of votes by having 24 per cent of total votes (30 per cent of the seats in the parliament), MVR got 20 per cent of total votes (17 per cent of total seats in the parliament) and COPEI took 11 per cent of total votes (13 per cent of total seats in the parliament). However, Hugo Chávez won the presidential elections (held in December 6th 1998) by taking 56 per cent of total votes, and became the new president with the positive reports of The Carter Center and IRI on the elections⁵⁴. The votes of the

⁵⁰ This type of fraud known is as “the tally sheet trumps the ballot”. This type of fraud occurred when party poll workers at a given polling site conspired to redistribute the votes of those parties that did not have poll workers present when preparing the final tally sheet.

⁵¹ **Article 64:** All Venezuelans who have reached the age of 18 and are not subject to political disablement or civil interdiction are qualified to vote.

⁵² **Article 62:** All citizens have the right to participate freely in public affairs, either directly or through their elected representatives.

⁵³ It is important to emphasize that the National Electoral Council was founded before the presidency of Hugo Chávez.

⁵⁴ Reports on 1998 elections which prepared by the Carter Center and IRI can be seen from; <https://www.cartercenter.org/documents/1151.pdf> and from;

AD and COPEI supported candidates decreased in the 1993 and 1998 elections. Since the 1970s both parties of Punto Fijo democracy had 90 per cent of total votes; however, after the neoliberal austerity programs, their votes decreased. The traditional parties grew impotent to contain class conflict, and in particular to satisfy the demands of the lower classes that had suffered the most during the times of economic crisis (Buxton, 2001: 222). In short, the lower classes protested the Punto Fijo system in the 1998 Elections and the election of Chávez was not a surprise given his anti-neoliberal discourse.

After ratifying the new Bolivarian Constitution with a popular referendum, the administration decided to call early election and new presidential and legislative elections were held in July 30th 2000. This time Chávez (with his supporter parties as MAS, PCV etc.) took nearly 60 per cent of total votes and again became the President while the opposition candidate Francisco Arias Cárdenas took 37 per cent of total votes. Unlike the 1998 Legislative Elections, the 2000 Elections resulted with the victory of MVR. 44 per cent of total votes and 56 per cent of total seats in the assembly was taken by MVR. The AD got 16 per cent of total votes and 20 per cent of total seats and COPEI got 5 per cent of total votes and 4 per cent of total seats. This election took positive reports confirming the elections were free and fair from international organization and institutions- the Carter Center⁵⁵, OAS and European Union (EU).

After the 2000 Elections, another parliamentary election was held in 2005 and presidential election was held in 2006. The legislative elections of 2005 were protested by many opposite political parties who claimed that the new technological voting system records voting information of every citizen. For this reason the abstention rate was very high (nearly 75 per cent). The MVR took 60 per cent of total votes and took 114 of 165 seats in the assembly while the

<http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/Venezuela's%201998%20Presidential,%20Legislative%20and%20Gubernatorial%20Elections.pdf> date accessed December 1, 2014

⁵⁵ <https://www.cartercenter.org/documents/297.pdf> access date; November 25th 2014.

opposition withdrew from the election. Due to the high abstention rate and its uncompromising status with the opposition, the administration was criticized by OAS and EU observers. The 2006 Presidential Elections were held on December 3rd 2006. The Candidate of MVR was of course Hugo Chávez and The Candidate of the opposition was Manuel Rosales from A New Era Party (Un Nuevo Tiempo as UNT). There were four international observers during this election; OAS, EU⁵⁶, the Carter Center⁵⁷ and MERCOSUR. In the 2006 presidential elections, Chávez got 63 per cent of total votes and elected as president for another 6 year term while Manuel Rosales took 37 per cent of total votes. Again observer institutions gave positive reports about presidential elections. Even the founder of The Carter Center, former US President Jimmy Carter stated⁵⁸ that “as a matter of fact, of the 92 elections that we’ve monitored, I would say the election process in Venezuela is the best in the world⁵⁹”. Also the European Union Election Observation Mission to Venezuela in 2006⁶⁰ reported that “the 2006 presidential elections were held in respect of national laws and international standards concerning electoral administration and the electronic voting system. The high turnout and peaceful atmosphere in which they were held, together with the acceptance of results by all those involved”.

After all of these electoral victories President Chávez launched a new socialist agenda and wanted to create the legal base for the 21st Century Socialism in Venezuela through a referendum. This referendum engendered many debates in the society. According to this referendum the term limits for the president will be

⁵⁶http://eeas.europa.eu/eucom/pdf/missions/moe_ue_venezuela_2006_final_eng.pdf access date; November 25th 2014.

⁵⁷http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/democracy/venezuela_2006_eng.pdf access date; November 25th 2014.

⁵⁸ Retrieved from; <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/7272> on November 25th 2014.

⁵⁹ Retrieved from; <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/oct/03/why-us-demonises-venezuelas-democracy> on November 25th 2014.

⁶⁰ Retrieved from http://eeas.europa.eu/eucom/missions/2006/venezuela/index_en.htm on December 10, 2014.

revoked and with the new enabling act the power of the executive will be increased. This time opposition expanded from former elites to university student groups and MVR moderates (like Podemos). The referendum held on December 2nd 2007. The voter turnout rates were low; 55 per cent. Also students' movement created a change and President Chávez lost an election for the first time. 49.29 per cent of the voters said yes, 50.7 per cent of the voters said no to the constitutional changes. However, President Chávez did not quit pursuing his political agenda. According to the 1999 Bolivarian Constitution the President could only serve for two six year terms. When the 2007 Referendum did not change this, he decided to have another referendum for just abolishing term limits for all elected officials in Venezuela. This referendum were held on February 15th 2009, the voter turnout rates were higher than the 2007 Referendum and reached over 70 per cent (Corrales and Penfold, 2011: 37). Both of these referendums were declared as free and fair by the international organizations like OAS, the Carter Center and United Nations etc.⁶¹.

Last Legislative and Presidential Elections during Chávez administration were held in 2010 and 2012. Since 2007, the Chavista Block gathered under a new socialist political party, PSUV, thus the two biggest candidates for these elections were PSUV and Democratic Unity Table (MUD). Like PSUV, MUD was too a new coalition, and formed in 2008 and included a former Chavista party, Podemos. The 2010 Legislative Elections had the highest voter turnout rates since the 1993 Elections and reached to 66 per cent. PSUV got 1 per cent more votes than MUD and won the elections and 96 seats of total 165 seats in the Assembly. MUD won 64 seats. Two years later the 2012 Presidential Elections were held between PSUV's candidate Hugo Chávez and MUD's candidate Henrique Capriles. The voter turnout rates got higher than the legislative elections and reached 80 per cent percent. This time President Chávez won 55 per cent of total

⁶¹ Two of these reports can be retrieved from the official site of the Carter Center http://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/venezuela_120307.html and from the official site of the NACLA <https://nacla.org/news/debrief-new-report-venezuelas-re-election-referendum> date accessed; December 1st 2014

votes while Capriles won 44 per cent. The 2010 and the 2012 Elections were declared as free and fair by different international organizations like Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Carter Center and Council on Hemispheric Affairs etc.⁶²

In sum, Venezuela had a decent electoral regime during the Chávez period. There were recurring, free and fair elections. Venezuela also used high technology voting system that produced in the US. The participation and competition processes were under the protection of the constitution. Low turnout rates may show the disappointment of voters with the electoral system (Fowler, 2006). Thus, in the case of Venezuela, it is possible to say that increasing voter turnout rates (except the 2005 Elections) may show voter's satisfaction with the electoral process (more information on voter turnout rates in Venezuela will be given through Participatory Democracy section). The power struggle (that continues since the collapse of Punto Fijo Democracy) between Puntofijistas and Chavistas caused an increasing polarization between society, thus this situation created tension especially during election times leading to higher voting turnout. Voting turnout trends during the Chávez era in Venezuela is further provided and evaluated in the Section 5.2; the participatory democracy dimension.

5.1.2. The Competitiveness of the Electoral Process: Fairness Issue

However, there are also some serious critiques on elections in Venezuela. Firstly, even though it has been forbidden to use state resources for campaign funding there were no strict restriction or sanctions against this action (Human Rights Watch Reports). According to the Bolivarian Constitution using state resources for electoral campaign is illegal and the control mechanism is the Electoral

⁶² The reports on the subject can be retrieved from the official site of the Carter Center; http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/venezuela-pre-election-rpt-2013.pdf and <http://www.coha.org/venezuelas-parliamentary-elections-everybody-wins/> date accessed; December 2nd 2014.

Institute (CNE). However during the electoral campaigns pro-Chávez groups always had the upper hand because the line between social spending of the state and the aids that distributed by the ruling party during the electoral campaigns were blurred (Freedom House Reports). Also state resources like state-owned companies like PDVSA, CANTV, Electricidad buildings were used for electoral campaigns especially during the Referendum of 2009 and “vote yes” messages displayed on all of these buildings⁶³.

The second criticism concerned the control of the Electoral Institute (CNE) by the Chávez administration (Corrales and Penfold, 2011). CNE has five different members and each member was nominated by the President and elected by majority vote in the National Assembly. CNE also takes decisions by majority vote (three out of five). Considering PSUV both had the Presidency and the majority in the National Assembly the independence of the members of CNE became controversial. The opposition of the Venezuelan government had always accused CNE for being biased in favor of the government. Even the Cardinal and Archbishop of Caracas, Urosa Savino said majority of Venezuelans “have doubts about the CNE and the electoral system” in 2006⁶⁴. However many international organizations (as The Carter Center, OAS and EU) observed the elections in Venezuela (all of them arranged by the CNE) and all of them approved the CNE’s role during these elections and reported as. Also the executive secretary of the opposition Ramon Guillermo Avelado declared CNE as “an excellent sign of democratic institutions in the country” on 2012⁶⁵. In short the debates on the status of the CNE still continues but it is clear to state that both of these deficiencies (about using state resources and the status of the CNE) were related to erosion of institutions of horizontal accountability by the Chávez administration and they will be elaborated throughout this chapter.

⁶³ Retrieved from the official site of the Guardian Newspaper on December 30th, 2014; <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/feb/12/venezuela-hugo-chavez-referendum>

⁶⁴ Retrieved from <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/1634> on December 30th 2014.

⁶⁵ Retrieved from <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/6803> on December 30th 2014.

5. 2. President Chávez's Participatory Democracy:

President Chávez defined the democratic regime of Venezuela as a participatory one since the beginning of his presidency. He associated representative democracy with the interest of wealthy sectors. According to President Chávez; “the idea of participatory democracy conceives of direct citizen participation and engagement in public policy as an essential element of the democratic quality of a polity” (Canache, 2007). On the other hand, the Punto Fijo democracy adopted the liberal principles of protection of individual civil and political rights, and the institutions and mechanisms of political representation. So after Chávez was elected in the 1998 Elections, he replaced the representative democratic regime of Venezuela (was in effect during Punto Fijo Democracy) with a participatory one and prepared the legal base for this by drafting a new constitution. At this point, it is important to analyze the participation of the Venezuelan society into the decision making process through elections, civil society organizations, community councils and cooperatives etc.

Voter turnout rates are using for determining the participation of the voters to the elections. To analyze the participation of the Venezuelan society to the elections during the Chávez administration, an assessment on the voter turnout rates in Venezuela is needed. As Table 4 illustrates; voter turnout rates in the presidential elections decreased nearly 20 percent after the 1988 Elections. During the 1988 Elections the voter turnout rate was 81 percent, during the 1993 Elections it was 61 percent, and then during the 1998 Elections it was increased by three points and reached to 64 percent. However voter turnout rates during the Mega Elections of 2000 was 56 percent which was low and after 2000 the rates started to increase again and reached the same rates during the 1980s which is impressive considering voting has not been compulsory in Venezuela since 1998. It is clear to see the effects of the neoliberal adjustment programs (implemented in 1980s by AD and COPEI) and the 1989 Caracazo uprising on the Venezuelan society, the

voter turnout rates decreased nearly 20 percent in ten years. After President Chávez got elected, the polarization within the politics reflected on the voter's behaviors. However this effect seemed to disappear since 2006 because voter turnout rates during and after 2006 Elections increased constantly.

Table 4: Voter Turnout Rates during Presidential Elections in Venezuela⁶⁶

Year	Voter Turnout	Total Vote (In Millions)	Registration (In Millions)	Voting Age Population (In Millions)	Compulsory Voting
1988	81.92%	7.5	9.1	10.3	Yes
1993	60.16%	5.8	9.6	12	Yes
1998	63.45%	6.9	11	13.4	No
2000	56.31%	6.6	11.7	14.1	No
2006	74.69%	11.7	15.7	15.4	No
2012	80.28%	15.1	18.9	18.5	No

As Table 5 below, shows legislative elections had lower turnout rates than presidential elections. Again, during 1988 Elections the voter turnout rates were about 82 per cent and nearly every parliamentary election after that the rates were decreased (to 60 per cent in 1993, to 53 per cent in 1998, to 57 per cent in 2000, to 25 per cent in 2005). In 2005, the opposition bloc decided to protest government and CNE due to the new technological voting system and claimed that government collected information on voters by taking fingerprints of voters also demanded that elections should hold former paper based system. When the government refused this offer, they decided to use their abstention rights and this was the reason of the lowest turnout rate in Venezuelan democratic history. Lastly in the Legislative Elections of 2010 the voter turnout rates increased, it even

⁶⁶ Retrieved from The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance's (IDEA) website; <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=236> on November 5th 2014.

passed the 1993 Elections and reached 66 per cent. Voter turnout rates were consistent with the participatory democracy model of the Chávez administration, except the 2005 Elections, the voter turnout rates increased since the 1998 Elections.

Table 5: Voter Turnout Rates during the Legislative Elections in Venezuela⁶⁷

Year	Voter Turnout	Total Vote (In Millions)	Registration (In Millions)	Voting Age Population (In Millions)	Compulsory Voting
1988	81.65%	7.5	9.1	10.3	Yes
1993	60%	6	10	12	Yes
1998	52.65%	5.7	11	13.4	No
2000	56.55%	6.5	11.6	14.1	No
2005	25.26%	3.6	14.2	15	No
2010	66.42%	11.5	17.4	17.4	No

There are many reasons for lower or higher voter turnout rates, the argument on the subject still continues. Citizens may believe that voting for one party or another will do little to alter public policy, they can feel incompetent and may decide to not to vote (Fowler, 2006: 336). Countries with compulsory voting systems tend to have higher voter turnout rates. Since 1998, voting is not compulsory in Venezuela. In addition, socioeconomic factors have important effects on the voter turnout behaviors of voters (Fowler, 2006; Edlin, Gelman and Kaplan, 2007). For example different levels of education, income, classes affect the voter turnout rates. Citizens with higher education level tend to vote more; it is the same for higher income levels. Actually there are very important studies t

⁶⁷ Retrieved from The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance's (IDEA) website; <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=236> on November 5th 2014.

analyzing the relationship between poverty and democracy which will be discussed under the equality and social right topics.

During the Chávez administration, Venezuelan society was incorporated into politics through communal councils, cooperatives and civil society organizations. New laws on cooperatives were enacted, cooperative memberships became free and cooperatives received tax privileges. The government established a new institution for increasing the number of cooperatives: the Venezuelan National Superintendent of Cooperatives, SUNACOOOP. Because of the government's increasing investments during the Chávez administration, the number of cooperatives skyrocketed. There were approximately 800 cooperatives in Venezuela in 1998, with 230,000 members. These totals increased to 228,000 cooperatives and 1.5 million members in 2008⁶⁸.

The Chávez administration also created communal councils (CC), the legal basis of which was established through the 2006 Act of Communal Councils. In addition, a specific ministry was established to promote and finance the CCs: the Ministry of Popular Power for Participation and Social Protection (Machado, 2009: 175). In 2009, the Organic Law of Communal Councils was enacted, and the laws on the CCs were expanded. For example, the Community Bank was established to fund the CCs, and minimum and maximum numbers of member families were defined for the formation of CCs. Under this law, CCs could be formed with a minimum 150 and a maximum of 400 families in urban areas, a minimum of 20 families in rural areas and a minimum 10 families in indigenous communities. To form a CC, an advocacy group first had to be assembled. Then, this group would limit the boundary of the community and run a census within it. In addition, a public meeting was required, at which at least 30 percent of the community's adult population was required to participate to elect a spokesman for the CC and to form working committees. Under Article 31 (in the Organic Law of

⁶⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.mpcomunas.gob.ve/sunacoop/> on November 7th 2014.

Communal Councils), these committees could focus on Human Rights, Health, Education, Urban Land, Housing, Communal Production, Protection of Family and Children, Gender Equality, Sports, Cultural and Social Formation Committees, etc. While forming the committees, the CC members were expected to consider the problems in the community, including infrastructure problems and other issues related to the quality of life of the inhabitants of the community (Goldfrank, 2010: 45-46).

Table 6: Community Members' Opinions on Community Councils⁶⁹

Questions in the Survey	Answers of the Interviewees	
How do you consider the relations between the communal council and community?	Positive, 71%	Negative, 28%
Who began the initiative to form the CC in your neighborhood?	Community Members, 85%	State Officials, 7%
Are most of the members of the community involved with the actions of the CC?	Yes, 84%	No, 15%
Are there sufficient plans to increase youth participation in the CC?	Yes, 83%	No, 15%
Who regularly participates in the design of the projects for this CC?	Members of the CC, 69%	Other 31%
Do the CC's projects conclude as planned by the community?	Yes, 73%	No, 16%
Are there superior members who make decisions over the other members of the CC?	Yes, 21%	No, 76%
Can people with different political opinions be part of this CC?	Yes, 70%	No, 19

In 2012, the number of CCs reached to 40,000 (Machado, 2009: 178), and their funding came directly from the government through the Community Bank. (Maya and Lander; 2011: 59). According to the 2008 Report of the Centre for Peace at the Central University of Venezuela, the Community Bank provided 3.2 billion Bolivars in 2006, 2.1 billion Bolivars in 2007 and 3.2 billion Bolivars in 2008 to

⁶⁹ Machado, 2008

the CCs. In 2008, the CCs used this funding for road construction (15 percent of the total funding), water installation (14 percent), electricity installations (14 percent), sport and youth centers (13 percent), to build schools (12 percent), the construction of buildings for the CCs and paving sidewalks (10 percent), and to build parks (4 percent) (Machado, 2009: 180). An important survey assessing the opinions of Venezuelans about the CCs was administered by the Gumilla Foundation Center in 2008. In this survey, the study team interviewed members of different community councils from all over the country and asked the same questions. Some of these questions and the interviewees' answers are provided in Table 6 above.

According to this survey, 71 percent of the interviewees held positive opinions about the relationship between the community and the CC; this result demonstrates the communities' approval of the CCs. The initiatives for forming CCs mostly came from community members rather than from state officials. According to the Organic Law of CCs, the minimum age for becoming a member of a CC is 15, not 18, which help to increase youth participation in the CCs. In addition, 69 percent of the members of CCs were involved in planning the CCs' projects. The other 31 percent consisted of state officials and non-members of the CCs but members of the community. The CCs' decisions were made collectively according to the 76 percent of the interviewees. Finally, different political opinions were welcomed by the CCs.

The cooperatives and CCs had great effect on President Chávez's participatory democracy model. 10 per cent of adult Venezuelan population became members of a cooperative and thousands of families started to decide the politics in their neighborhood through communal councils. However, these policies were also criticized by the opposition. Main criticism was about unfair competition during the elections. The government transferred billions of dollars to the missions, cooperatives and communal councils in return these investments increased their votes. Another criticism was about corruption. There were no effective controls

over the government funding to these cooperatives and council; hence, the opposition accused Chávez administration for tolerating the corruption within the cooperatives and community councils for getting more votes (Corrales and Penfold, 2011).

It can be argued that incorporating Venezuelans in the democracy plan was very successful. During the Chávez presidency, a record number of elections, referendums, and recall elections were held (20 elections in total since 1998) It is clear that the Chávista leaders' social-based democratic model incorporated the poorer and apolitical part of society in the new democratic model. As will be elaborated upon below, however, the Chávez administration did not make an effort to strengthen the institutionalized horizontal accountability mechanisms during his term, although there was marked improvement in socioeconomic equality and social rights through the provision of free health and education services, housing rights, food programs, etc.

At this point, the institutional difference between participatory democracy and liberal democracy should be noted: Liberal democracy emphasizes minority rights and the checks and balances system, while participatory democracy includes majority rule, the mobilization of society and incorporating society into the decision-making process. These differences have also led to different evaluations of the democratic system in Venezuela. Ellner argued that “social based democracy is often conducive to weak institutions. The concept of majority rule embodied by radical democracy discards the institutional mechanisms and thus may end up weakening the institutional framework” (2011: 423). This argument emphasizes the main ideological clash between liberal and participatory democracy, and the Chávez administration is the perfect example of this clash. President Chávez established the participatory democracy model to incorporate the people into the decision-making process, especially at the local level, by forming cooperatives, community councils etc. At that time, the institutions of

liberal democracy, particularly horizontal accountability, were damaged. The checks and balances system (the most important democratic tool according to liberal democracy supporters) became unbalanced in favor of the executive, and the weakness of the scrutiny process led to a significant increase in corruption levels in Venezuela during the Chávez administration (Ellner, 2011: 84).

5. 3. Horizontal Accountability during the Chávez Administration:

In general, accountability assures that public officials or public organizations remain on the virtuous path. Hence accountability mechanisms are essential for the democratic process, because they provide the people's representation and the voters with the information needed for judging the propriety and effectiveness of the conduct of the government (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, 1999: 176). In democratic regimes, citizens collectively give their consents to the elected governments to use power. However, controlling this use of power is in the hands of citizens through vertical or horizontal accountability. While vertical accountability provides control on governments only election times, horizontal accountability provides control on governments of citizens in between elections. This is the reason why horizontal accountability is more vital for democratic regimes. Establishing mechanisms of horizontal accountability is more challenging than vertical accountability.

5.3.1. Weakening the Checks and Balances System:

As explained in the Introduction, O'Donnell analyzed the institutions of horizontal accountability in Latin America (1998) and focused on the relationship between polyarchy and accountability. He claimed that polyarchies were formed

through the “uneasy synthesis” of liberalism, republicanism and democracy⁷⁰. According to O’Donnell, the democracy-equality, liberalism-freedom, and republicanism-responsiveness relationships had to support each other and coexist with the rule of law. All citizens should have the equal rights, no one should be above the law and a citizen’s freedoms should not be limited (O’Donnell, 1998: 113). Democracy guarantees equality and the political rights of citizens, liberalism guarantees the freedoms of citizens (especially in the private sphere) and republicanism limits executive power. According to O’Donnell, problems with horizontal accountability create “weakness in the liberal and also the republican components of many new polyarchies” (1998: 112).

It is quite clear that Venezuela had a polyarchical regime during the Chávez administration (Hawkins, 2003; O’Donnell, 2004a; Ellner and Salas, 2007), which largely guaranteed electoral rights and freedoms in combination with other political freedoms to ensure a decent electoral process. The existence of a functional and effective electoral democracy demonstrates the democratic component of the Venezuelan polyarchy. As Hugo Chávez frequently stated, Venezuelan democracy was not a representative democracy but a participatory democracy that excluded the liberal component and included the republican component of polyarchy. However, although Venezuela had a functioning electoral regime based on the institutionalization of the competitive electoral process, it is not possible to say the same for the horizontal accountability dimension, which would have transformed the empowering effect of participatory democracy into a full-fledged substantive democracy despite the progress in social rights and social justice during the Chávez era.

⁷⁰ The democratic tradition springs from ancient Athens; republicanism's roots lie in pre-imperial Rome and certain medieval Italian cities; and the liberal tradition has beginnings traceable to the feudal societies of medieval Europe, and later and more pointedly, to the England of John Locke and the France of the Baron de Montesquieu. The three traditions are partly contradictory, for each has basic principles that are inconsistent with the basic principles of at least one of the other currents. The tensions thus generated give polyarchies much of their uniquely dynamic and open-ended character (O’Donnell, 1998: 114).

Horizontal accountability is an important mechanism to prevent and detect corruption and the abuse of public powers via executive, legal and judicial forums such as independent constitutional courts, auditors, ombudsmen, inspectorates and controllers (Bovens, 2007). In other words, horizontal accountability includes the separation of powers concept and the checks and balances system. Thus, if the executive power rejects subjecting itself to horizontal accountability and refuses to subject itself to the laws, then the republican dimension of polyarchy will be damaged. However, why would an elected official want to limit his/her power? As O'Donnell asked, "why recognize powers other than one's own when one is striving for the public good?" (1998: 118). There are two different ways of violating horizontal accountability. The first is encroachment, which occurs when one state agency trespasses on the lawful authority of another. The second is corruption, which occurs when a public official obtains illegal advantages, whether for personal use or for the benefit of associates (O'Donnell, 1998).

As for encroachment after the 1998 election, Chávez formed a Constituent Assembly that possessed absolute power to write a new constitution and redefine the state.⁷¹ After the election, the Assembly dissolved the democratically elected Congress and dismissed all of the members of the Supreme Court as well as the Attorney General. Then, the assembly drafted the 1999 Bolivarian Constitution. As noted previously, Hugo Chávez and his supporters drafted the new Bolivarian Constitution of Venezuela, which was ratified through popular referendum in 1999. According to Article 200 of the Bolivarian Constitution,

Deputies of the National Assembly shall enjoy immunity in the exercise of their functions from the time of their installation until the end of their term or resignation. Only the Supreme Tribunal of Justice shall have competence over any crimes may be charged as committed by members of the National Assembly,

⁷¹ Through a popular referendum, the proposal won 88 percent of the total vote and Chavistas won 125 of 131 seats in the assembly.

and only the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, subject to authorization in advance from the National Assembly, shall have the power to order their arrest and prosecution

According to this article, a new institution, the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, was formed in place of the Supreme Court. The Justices of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice were elected for a single term of twelve years. However, the final selection of judges would be made by the National Assembly, which impinges on the independence of the court. Additionally, Justices of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice can be removed from power by the National Assembly with the vote of a qualified two-thirds majority of the members, which limits the authority of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice. Under the threat of removal, the judges could not reach objective decisions. Clearly, this situation directly affected horizontal accountability because the judiciary needs to be independent from the executive power. In this case, the power to appoint and remove judges should not be in the hands of the National Assembly.

Under the new constitution, the President had the right to dissolve the National Assembly, which in turn places the assembly under the authority of the President. In addition, political parties became very weak during this period. The Punto Fijo parties such as AD and COPEI lost their influence in society, and almost all of the leftist parties joined Chávez' political movement, the MVR. President Chávez had great decree powers to make decisions independent of the assembly. After the 2000 elections, the assembly passed an enabling act that empowered Chávez to rule by decree for one year. Chávez used his first decree power to implement the famous 49 Laws Package. The National Assembly also granted Chávez another enabling act in 2007 for 18 months. Consequently, the executive had the power to enact laws and had autonomy from the influence of other actors (such as the military), but the executive was also not accountable to other elected actors (such as an independent judiciary). Thus, Venezuelan democracy's checks and balances system was eliminated during this period. For example, during his presidency,

Chávez used an enabling law four times, in 1999, 2000, 2007 and 2010, and issued 224 decrees and laws by himself. Additionally, the power of the executive increased with the 1999 Constitution. For instance, the president himself could abolish the National Assembly, and after the 2009 referendum, term limits for all elected officials were revoked. These policies clearly undermined the checks and balances system. The damage to the horizontal accountability institutions created a new delegative democracy in Venezuela (O'Donnell, 1994).

5. 3. 2. The Media Freedoms in Venezuela during the Chávez Period:

One of the most contested topics on Venezuelan democracy under the Chávez Presidency was the status of the media and media freedom. Pro-Chavistas accused the private media for supporting the 2002 Coup while anti-Chavistas claimed that Chávez administration took the control of the media in Venezuela. The controversy centered on the effects of the changes regarding the media ownership under the Chávez period. Before the Chávez administration the media i.e. most of the big media corporations were owned and run by the private sector dominated by various companies. The main reason for this was the distrust between political and economic elites. Venezuelan governments were always cautious against the traditional economic groups and were reluctant to grant them with broadcast licenses. Instead of trusting those traditional economic groups, Venezuelan governments allocated the licenses to “the efforts of ‘newcomers’, preferably groups associated with incoming political elites, mainly to guarantee a symbiotic relationship” (Cañizález and Lugo-Ocando, 2008: 193). Thus, this symbiotic relationship would provide trust and guarantee their co-existence within the same system.

There are four popular newspapers in Venezuela for years; El Nacional (first published in 1943) El Universal (first published in 1909), Ultimas Noticias (first published in 1958) and Diario 2001 (First published in 1968). Three of these

newspapers were anti-Chavista during the Chávez administration (Cañizález and Lugo-Ocando, 2008: 194). Considering the decentralized nature of the Venezuelan media there are also many different local newspapers.

Before Chavismo, broadcast media ownership was in the hands of the private sector, there was just one state owned TV Channel; VTV. The biggest three TV channels in Venezuela were RCTV, Venevisión and Televén until 2005. RCTV and Venevisión had 75 per cent of the audience share and almost 80 per cent of all of the broadcast advertisement revenue in 2005. Also Globovision was the biggest news channel in the country and was very influential in setting the news agenda (Cañizález and Lugo-Ocando, 2011: 195). TV or radio license agreements were given by the Venezuelan governments to the pro-government groups⁷². The Chávez administration's decision for not renewing the RCTV's broadcast license for terrestrial broadcasting in 2007 was about the continuity of these policies. However, contrary to the alleged claims, RCTV was not closed by the government. The channel moved from the terrestrial broadcasting to private channel broadcasting.

Today 94 per cent of the broadcast media ownership still is in the hands of the private sector in Venezuela. "For the years 2000-2001, the state channels averaged about 1.9 percent of the market, as compared to 5.9 percent for 2009-2010" (Weisbrot and Ruttenberg, 2010). Numbers of state owned TV Channels increased to five (TVES, Vive TV, TV Catia and Asamblea) during the Chávez administration. However, as Table 7 below, illustrates, according to the reports of the TV viewing behavior of Nielsen Media Research International⁷³ only 5 per

⁷² Licenses of Televén and Globovision were granted to former adviser of the President Jaime Lusinchi and vice-minister of information during the first government of Carlos Andres Pérez.

⁷³ The Nielsen Media Research International is a private company in Switzerland. The company uses Television Audience Measurement (TAM) for research. TAM is the specialized branch of media research, dedicated to quantifying (size) and qualifying (characteristics) this detailed television audience information. For more information see <http://www.agbnielsen.net/>

cent of total Venezuelan TV viewers followed the state channels in 2010, this number was 1.67 per cent in 2002. Still nearly 95 per cent of total Venezuelan TV viewers prefer to watch private channels or paid TV channels since 2000. If 5 per cent of total TV viewers followed the state owned media, was it possible drawing a conclusion and claiming the state controls the media?

Table 7: The Evolution of Venezuelan Television Audience Share from 2000-2010⁷⁴

Month/Year	Private Channels (%)	State Channels (%)	Paid TV/Others (%)
January 2000	80.79	2.04	17.17
January 2002	81.25	1.67	17.08
January 2004	85.85	2.52	11.63
January 2006	84.86	4.14	11.00
January 2008	64.93	7.14	27.93
January 2010	60.97	5.13	33.90

According to the Freedom House Reports on Freedom of Press Venezuelan press has not been free since 2003. In 2002, the Report on the Venezuelan media was partly free. Freedom House explains its point of origin as “the individual” and uses a methodology again including liberal economic principles. As already explained Venezuelan democracy has been participatory democracy and excluded individualism and liberal economic principles.

Relation between media and horizontal accountability is crucial because mass media encourages the institutions of horizontal accountability to be more effective and powerful (Fox: 2000: 12). Thus, media creates pressure on the institutions of horizontal accountability for doing their jobs if they are not the media will point

⁷⁴ Weisbrot and Ruttenberg, 2010

the deficiencies out, criticize it and create civil society awareness and politicians would be obliged to strengthen these institutions. Media also points out to the wrongdoings of the government again create awareness and make government to act accountable against its citizens.

5.3.3. Corruption during the Chávez Administration:

Another important subject in horizontal accountability is corruption, which also occurred in Venezuela during the Chávez administration. Corruption has always been a major problem in all Latin American countries, including Venezuela.

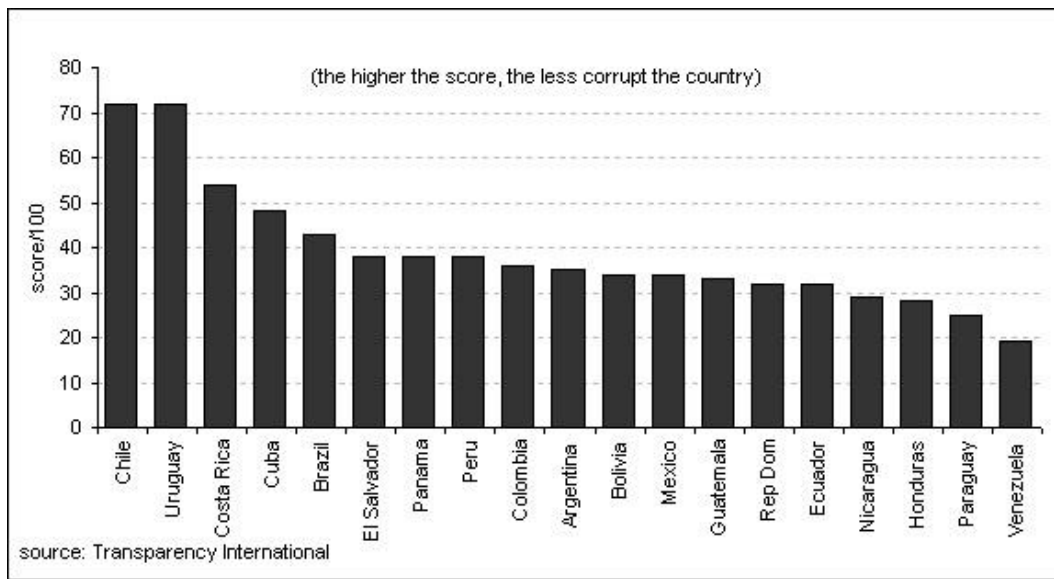


Figure 7: The Ranking of Corruption among Latin American Countries

However, as shown in Figure 7, Venezuela ranked as the most corrupt Latin American country according to the Transparency International Corruption List of 2012. This report states, “according to survey participants in the region (Latin America), the institutions most affected by corruption levels are political parties,

the legislative and judicial branches, and the police. Political parties, though, come out as the most corrupt in a majority of the countries analyzed in the region” (Transparency International Report of 2012).

During his election campaign in 1998, Hugo Chávez promised to fight corruption, but according to reports by different international organizations such as the World Bank and Transparency International, corruption in Venezuela reached the highest level in its history, particularly with regard to mission funds and the lack of transparent practices by the Venezuelan Treasury. Venezuela ranked 70th among 91 countries with 2.8 points (where 10 is the highest and 1 is the lowest) on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI)⁷⁵ in 2001. However in 2006, Venezuela ranked 138th among 163 states by taking 2.3 CPI point⁷⁶ and in 2012 Venezuela ranked 165th among 176 countries.

The increasing corruption rates also affected Venezuelans. According to Latinobarómetro data, 28.6 percent of the interviewees thought the main problem in Venezuela was corruption. In addition, 38 percent of the interviewees said that state institutions did not do anything to reduce corruption. These data demonstrate Venezuelans’ awareness of the corruption problem and their lack of trust in the government to solve the problem.

Beginning in 2006, a series of corruption charges was levied against elected officials. For example, former Minister of Defense General Raúl Isaías Baduel (also one of the four founding members of the MBR-200) was arrested on corruption charges in 2007 and sentenced to eight years in prison for corruption in

⁷⁵ Retrieved from the official site of the Transparency International; http://archive.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2001

⁷⁶ Retrieved from the official site of the Transparency International; http://archive.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006

2010⁷⁷. Additionally, in 2008, the government's anti-corruption watchdog Comptroller General Clodosbaldo Russian prohibited nearly 400 people from running for public office in the 2008 regional elections because they were being investigated for corruption and misuse of public funds⁷⁸. However, the opposition claimed that these corruption charges were political, even though half of the 400 people were from the Chavista movement. Despite these arguments, the failure of the Chávez administration to fight corruption was very clear, and according to Transparency International data, Venezuela is still one of the most corrupt states.

In conclusion, both encroachment and corruption occurred in Venezuela (by tying the legislative and judiciary to the executive through constitutional changes and by using policies that lacked transparency, not controlling funding transfers and not preventing corruption) during Chávez's administration, which clearly undermined the institutions of horizontal accountability. In particular, billions of dollars of funding for social missions were transferred to community councils and local authorities without strict control mechanisms. The Chávez administration was accused of ignoring such corruption within the Chavista movement to win more votes (Ellner, 2011).

5. 4. Socioeconomic Equality and Social Rights in Venezuelan Society under the Chávez Presidency and Their Political Impacts:

Studies show that there is a positive relationship between the levels of economic⁷⁹ and democratic development. These studies also note the importance of education levels in society and communication within society. When a society becomes

⁷⁷ Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8669618.stm> on December 1, 2014.

⁷⁸ Retrieved from <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/3570> on December 1, 2014.

⁷⁹ "Economic development is not the mere rise in per capita income but rather the changes in the class and social structure caused by industrialization and urbanization in which are most consequential for democracy" (Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1993: 85).

more educated and well informed, the population's interest in politics and its levels of tolerance increase. Thus, these developments create the basis for democratic governance (Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1993:71-72). Additionally, with capitalist economic development, the class structure of society changes and grows larger (from only upper and lower classes to working and middle classes). These new classes politically organize themselves politically; therefore, the powerful upper class will have to share political power with other classes. Consequently, the regime should become more democratic (Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1993: 83).

As Diamond and Morlino stated, "the principle of equality can be grounded on more or less radical socialist or communist doctrines. Equality may take the meaning of reductions of differences" (2005: xxvi). All countries with developed democracies should offer all of their citizens the same rights and protections. Democracies should also prohibit all types of discrimination on the basis of gender, race, religion, ethnicity etc. What was the record of the Chávez government regarding policy implementation on equality?

As stated previously, President Chávez's most successful democratic policy was providing the necessities for a more equal society, particularly by providing for necessary social and economic development. The social spending on health, education, and housing rights led to a more equal society. According to the latest data on income equality, Venezuela now has the most equal distribution of income in the region. In fact, as figure 8 illustrates, Venezuela has always had one of the most equal income distributions in the region. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) report "Time for Equality: Closing Gaps, Opening Trails" shows that in 2008, Venezuela had the most equal income distribution in the region. Finally, according to World Bank data, after 2011, the GINI Index of income inequality in Venezuela increased to 0.39.

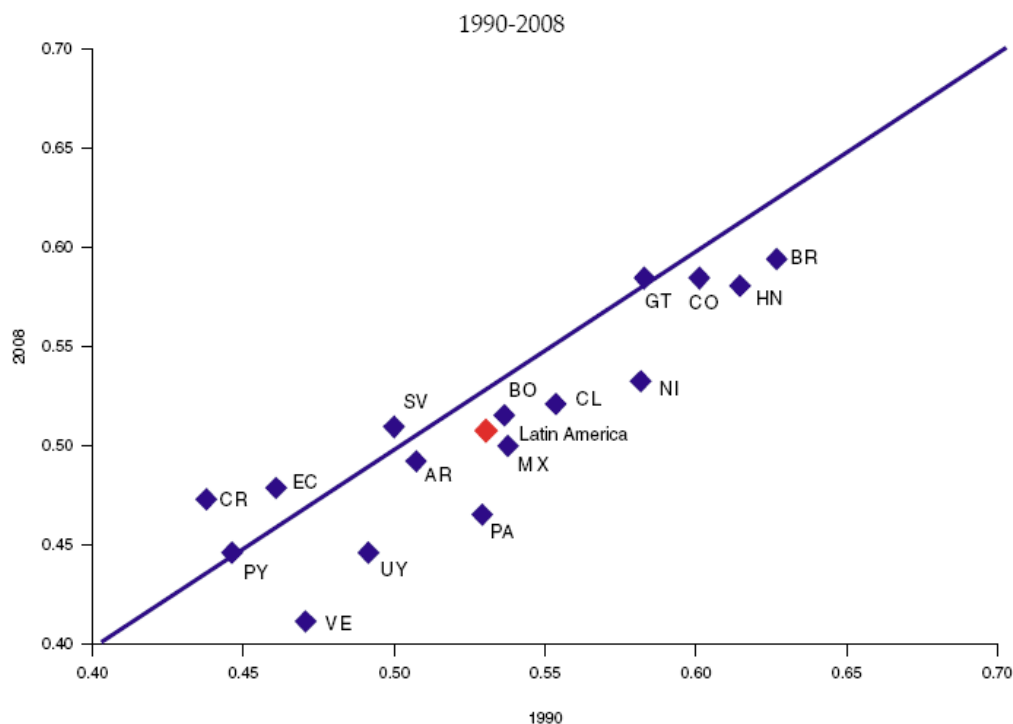


Figure 8: The change in the GINI⁸⁰ index of income inequality in the major Latin American economies from 1990 to 2008⁸¹

Venezuelan Minister of Women’s Affairs and Gender Equality Nancy Perez stated that Venezuela “achieved one the most positive gender equality indexes in the entire region⁸²; at 0.5 (considering “0” as full equality and “1” as total

⁸⁰ GINI index measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Lorenz curve plots the cumulative percentages of total income received against the cumulative number of recipients, starting with the poorest individual or household. The GINI index measures the area between the Lorenz curve and a hypothetical line of absolute equality, expressed as a percentage of the maximum area under the line. Thus a GINI index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 1 implies perfect inequality.

⁸¹ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of data from household surveys conducted in the respective countries.

⁸² Retrieved from; <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/6057> on November 30th 2014.

inequality)”. This achievement is the result of successful policies of positive discrimination by the Chávez government. President Chávez defined himself as a feminist at the World Social Forum in Brazil in 2009. He stated, “I am feminist and fight for the Bolivarian women to take the place it deserves in the construction of the socialist homeland. There cannot be Revolution without women's participation⁸³”. First, women’s rights were guaranteed under the new Bolivarian Constitution of Venezuela. Additionally, with the help of increasing oil income after the 2000s, President Chávez created a special fund for women. All housewives were put on salary through the recognition of domestic labor as a generator of added value and a creator of wealth and social welfare. During the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the UN Chair of the Commission for Social Development and the Permanent Representative for Venezuela to the UN, Jorge Valero, explained the gender equality policies of the Venezuelan government in the following way⁸⁴;

Acts were adopted: the Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence; the Law of Equal Opportunities; the Law on the Promotion and Protection of Breastfeeding; and Organic Law of Labor for the Workers which allows the establishments of family and gender equality committees. That is why 50 per cent of public offices are held by women. Out of the five branches that make up the National Power, three are headed by women: the Electoral Branch, The Moral Branch, and the Judicial Branch. The participation of women in Community Council is over 60 percent

Despite these developments on women’s rights and gender equality, domestic violence against women in Venezuela increased over the period. In 2007, nearly 5.000 women called the National Institute of Women’s Affairs hotline for help. Additionally, in 2007, the National Assembly passed the Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence; however, according to Amnesty International,

⁸³ Retrieved from; <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/6743> on November 30th 2014.

⁸⁴ Retrieved from the official United Nations Website on November 30th 2014; <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/generaldiscussion/memberstates/venezuela.pdf>

the practices under the law were insufficient. There were no women's shelters in Venezuela, and the victims' perpetrators often went unpunished⁸⁵.

As previously explained, there is a direct relationship between a society's socioeconomic equality and democracy. Extreme social and economic inequality decreases the quality of democracy in a country because of the lack of distribution of personal income to people who live below the hunger threshold, racial or gender discrimination, and low literacy levels. Indeed, many different aspects of inequality can affect the quality of a given society's democracy (Campbell, 2008). To assess socioeconomic equality, Venezuelans' social and economic rights and constitutional and practical rights are explained in the context of the policies of the Chávez administration.

President Chávez's first step in creating a social-based democracy was changing the constitution. This act was followed by reversing the neoliberal measures of previous governments (2001 and 2004), launching the social programs known as missions (for free health care and education, low-priced food distribution etc. after 2004), nationalizing important industrial sectors such as electricity and telecommunications, taking more control over the oil company PDVSA (after 2006) and finally implementing the 21st Century Socialism model for Venezuela (in 2005). With Venezuela's increasing oil income (after 9/11 and the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq), the social funding of the Venezuelan government reached its peak. "Government funding stimulated the creation of approximately 60,000 worker cooperatives and 30,000 community councils concentrated in underprivileged communities" (Ellner, 2011:424). Thus, for the first time, most Venezuelans had the opportunity to participate in political activities through their community councils. As explained previously, these community councils were formed with 200 to 400 families, and they met to discuss regional projects. Of

⁸⁵ Retrieved from <http://www.amnesty.org/en/appeals-for-action/call-government-venezuela-protect-womens-rights> on December 1, 2014.

course, these projects (such as building houses for the poor or opening job training centers for unemployed citizens) were funded by the state and a state controllership monitored their work.

The new social rights of Venezuelans were created by constitutional guarantee⁸⁶. After undermining the neoliberal policies in 2004, President Chávez launched the missions. These missions provided different services. For example, there were many Educational missions. Mission Robinson aimed to teach reading and writing to adults, Mission Ribas provided remedial high school-level classes to Venezuelan high school dropouts, and Mission Sucre provided free higher education for adults. There was also a health mission known as the Barrio Adentro Mission, which provided new clinics and hospital buildings and free health care. Mission Mercal was the Food and Nutrition Mission, which first aimed to achieve food sovereignty because the Venezuelan economy heavily depends on oil, and other production sources (such as agriculture) ceased to exist after the country's first oil extraction in the 1920s. Additionally, supermarkets called Mercal were established under this mission to provide low-price food, especially for the poor. Mission Hábitat was the Housing Mission, and it aimed to build new houses for the poor and new buildings for all of the other missions. Various other missions focused on the environment, land reform etc. The Barrio Adentro Mission involved 20,000 doctors, 551 medical diagnostic centers, 580 rehabilitation rooms, 33 high technology centers, and 459 optometrist centers. The Mission Sucre provided higher education to over 695,000 people. The Mission Robinson helped 1.5 million Venezuelans achieve literacy in its first two years, and UNESCO confirmed Venezuela as an "Illiteracy Free Territory" on October 28, 2005. The Mission Negra Hipolita had 26 "Centers of Social Inclusion" in which

⁸⁶ See the Bolivarian Constitution of Venezuela; Articles 70, 82, 83, 85 and 86.

over 3,390 people were treated by the Mission’s “System of Attention for Citizens Living on the Streets” in 2010⁸⁷.

Table 8: Comparing different human development data from 1996 to 2012⁸⁸

Years	1996	2006	2012
Literacy rate, adult total (% of people ages 15 +)	89	96	98
Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births)	22	16	13
Health expenditure, public (% of total health expenditure)	32	41.7	33.7
Unemployment, total (% of total labor force)	12.5	9.3	8.1
Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+)	41	50.6	50.2
Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line (% of population)	61	36	25.4
Extreme poverty measured with national poverty lines (% of the population)	30	11	-

As shown in Table 8 above, the missions improved socioeconomic rights in Venezuelan society. The literacy rate increased from 89 percent to 98 percent for adult citizens. The infant mortality rates per one thousand live births decreased from 22 percent to 13 percent in 2012. In addition, public health expenditures increased from 32 percent to 41 percent and then decreased to 33.7 percent in 2012. The female labor force participation rate was over 50 percent. Additionally, the poverty and extreme poverty rates decreased, which is very important in closing the poverty gap.

However, these missions were also criticized based on a number of aspects, which would decrease their effectiveness in terms of promoting democracy. First, there

⁸⁷ Data retrieved from the relevant ministries by <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/5936>, <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/10334> and <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/6931> on December 1st, 2014

⁸⁸ Source: www.data.worldbank.com , date accessed: December 1st, 2014.

were no effective control mechanisms over the state funding to the members of community councils, which increased corruption within the state. Second, the government began a politicization process of the missions and over time, the missions became a key factor in Chávez's political support and success. This support created unfair competition between the government and the opposition. The Chávez administration fully expropriated the PDVSA and ensured absolute state control over the oil industry when oil income increased during the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. Thus, GDP and wealth increased in the country, but the increased oil income was streamlined directly to the government. The Chávez administration used the oil income for the social missions, and in return, Chavismo received more support from society, while the opposition became less popular.

According to Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV) data, during the Chávez presidency, total public spending (percentage of GDP) increased from 23 percent in 1998 to 31 percent in 2006. In addition, social spending (percentage of total public spending) increased from 34 percent in 1996 to 45 percent in 2006. These increases clearly show that Venezuelans' belief in democracy increased during the Chávez presidency in parallel with the improvements in social welfare. The United Nations, the European Union, the US and even Chávez's opposition bloc had to appreciate Venezuela's social progress. Before the Chávez presidency, in 1997, 61 percent of Venezuela's total population lived under the poverty line, and this amount decreased to 30 percent in 2006. Additionally, the percentage of Venezuelans who lived under the extreme poverty line decreased from 30 percent in 1996 to 11 percent in 2006⁸⁹.

⁸⁹Retrieved from World Bank Data on November 30th 2014.

According to the Human Development Index Reports of UNDP⁹⁰; as seen in Figure 9, Venezuela has shown improvement each year. In 1995, Venezuela's HDI value was 0.629. In 2005, it increased to 0.692, in 2009, it was 0.732, in 2011, it reached 0.735, and finally, in 2013, it reached 0.764. From the 1980s to 2008, Venezuela was ranked among the medium HDI countries. However, since 2009, Venezuela has been ranked among the high HDI countries.

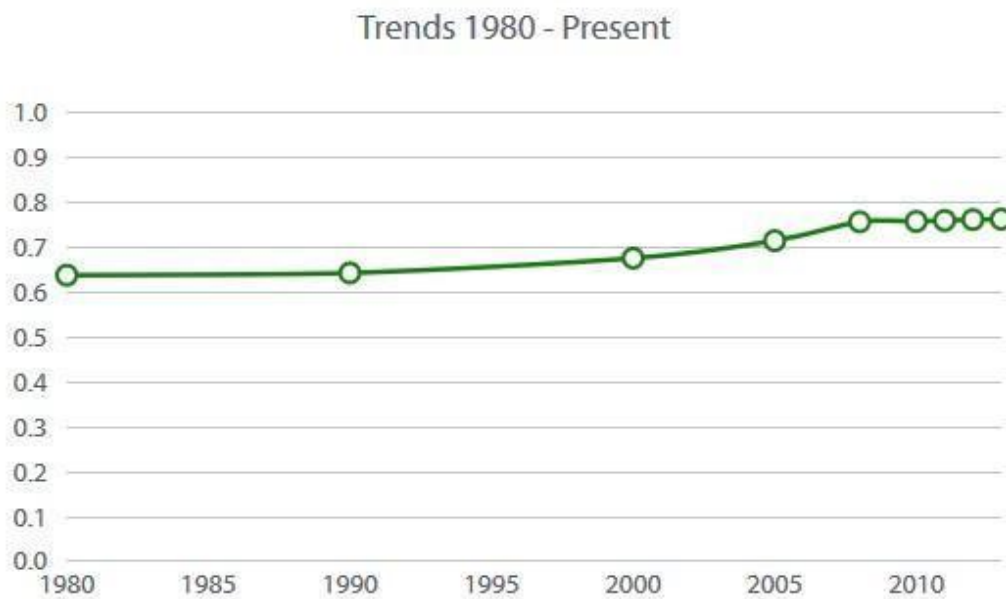


Figure 9: Human Development Index values of Venezuela

O'Donnell stated that HDI is a crucial measure for the quality of democracy (2008:13), and Venezuela's increasing HDI values are the result of the increasing social and economic development within Venezuelan society, which in turn improves the democratic quality of the Venezuelan regime. Finally, the positive

⁹⁰ Since 1990, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) combined indicators of health, education, income, inequality, gender, poverty, employment and vulnerability, human security, trade and financial flows, mobility and communication, environment and demography since 1990 for constituting Human Development Index (HDI). The UNDP assesses these indicators and then forms HDI value of states (from zero to one, zero lowest, one highest) and ranks them. There are three different categories; very high human development index countries (from 0.8 to 1), high HDI countries (from 0.7 to 0.79), medium HDI countries (from 0.6 to 0.69) and low HDI countries (from 0.3 to 0.59).

effects of the social welfare programs, communal councils and cooperatives on participatory democracy can be observed from the Latinobarómetro reports⁹¹.

Table 9: Latinobarómetro Data Analysis on Venezuelan Democracy

Subjects	Answers of Participants	1996 (%)	2002 (%)	2010 (%)
Support for Democracy	Democracy is preferable to any type of government	62	72.8	84.1
Democracy is the best form of government	Strongly Agree + Agree	-	69.3	87.5
Satisfaction with Democracy	Very Satisfied + Satisfied	30	40.4	49.1
Confidence in President	A lot of + Some Confidence	35	44.6	60
Confidence in National Congress	A lot of + Some Confidence	29.6	-	49.3

In 1996, only 62 percent of Venezuelans agreed that “democracy is preferable to any other type of government; however, after the Chávez presidency and his socioeconomic policies, this amount increased to the highest among all Latin American countries at 84 percent in 2010. In addition, the percentage of Venezuelans who defined democracy as the best type of government increased from 69 percent in 2002 to 87 percent in 2010. Confidence in the President increased rapidly after 1996 and nearly doubled by 2010, when it reached 60 percent. Confidence in the National Congress also increased after 1996, although the percentage was still low; it increased to 49.3 percent in 2010. However, the rates of satisfaction with democracy were lower, from 30 percent in 1996, to 40 percent in 2002 and 49 percent in 2010. Thus, although the numbers were increasing, the satisfaction rates were still quite low. In the 2011 Latinobarómetro survey, 70.4 percent of the participants agreed that Venezuela guaranteed the

⁹¹ Latinobarómetro Corporation is a private non-profit organization, based in Santiago, Chile, that is responsible for carrying out the Latinobarómetro survey and for distributing the data. Data retrieved from <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp> on December 1, 2014.

opportunity for political participation for one's ideas to be heard by the government. In addition, 88.8 percent of the interviewees agreed that the state had the resources to solve the problems in Venezuelan society. The Latinobarómetro data on Venezuelan democracy supported the positive relationship between socioeconomic development and democratic progress. Venezuelans' perception of democratic participation increased over the years.

President Chávez's political, social and economic actions were assessed in this chapter. During this period, there were significant improvements in social rights and socioeconomic status. However, there was also an obvious elimination of horizontal accountability institutions. The socioeconomic situation improved through the use of social funds, while the Punto Fijo regime excluded the poorer part of society from politics. During the 1980s, the implementation of neoliberal adjustment programs and the exclusion of certain parts of the population from politics set the stage for the Chávez Presidency. As expected, during this period, formerly excluded parts of the society became politically active through the participatory democratic model of the new administration. Communal Councils, cooperatives and unions were established. Local administrations also became stronger, but most importantly, through the assistance of social funding and missions, society's education levels increased, the poverty and extreme poverty rates significantly decreased, and Venezuela's gender equality statistics became the best on the whole continent. Venezuelan society became wealthier, better informed and more equal than ever before. All of these improvements had positive effects on Venezuela's democratic quality. Participation in elections increased, and confidence in the President and the National Assembly also increased. Even society's satisfaction with democracy increased; thus, the polarization within society became clear with these data. Nearly 50 percent of the interviewees were satisfied with their democratic regime during the Chávez period, while the other 50 percent were not. The elimination of the horizontal accountability institutions during this period clearly was one of the main reasons for this polarization. A damaged checks and balances system created a distrustful

opposition. In short, there were many positive and negative democratic developments during the period, and the relationship between these positive and negative developments is what should be analyzed.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the democratic changes and quality of Venezuelan democracy during the Chávez period. Hugo Chávez was elected as Venezuelan president in 1998, and he transformed the former Punto Fijo democracy model over the years to a participatory democracy model. His administration made significant progress on socioeconomic rights. During this period, Venezuela became one of the most equal societies on the continent, poverty rates rapidly decreased through the use of social missions, and education and health services became free. To fund these socioeconomic developments, the state used oil wealth and streamlined most of this increasing oil income to the social missions. During this process, the horizontal accountability institutions deteriorated, and the checks and balances system was damaged. The literature on Venezuelan politics during the Chávez period focused heavily on this damage and on President Chávez's populist and/or authoritarian policies (Jenga and Crandall, 2007 and Mainwaring, 2012). However, this study focuses on the empirical democratic literature and analyzes the Chávez period by comparing different aspects of democracy with Chávez's political, economic and social agenda.

The empirical democracy literature, and particularly democratic transition studies, has applied the procedural democratic approach to analyze the democratization process. However, the procedural approach failed to explain the relationship between socioeconomic developments and democratization. To broaden and provide a more accurate analysis of the subject, socioeconomic factors should also be considered, particularly in the case of Venezuela. For this reason, Merkel's

embedded democracy concept was adopted as the starting point for this study, but the concept was also expanded. Unlike Western democracies, non-Western democracies had not overcome their socioeconomic problems before establishing their democratic regimes. Most of the Non-western States were forced to address socioeconomic problems while also trying to establish a democratic regime. For example, to assess and compare the quality of democracy in Germany and Venezuela, one needs to analyze different dimensions of democracy because Germany first solved its socioeconomic problems and social rights issues and then consolidated its democratic regime. However, in the case of Venezuela, both socioeconomic problems and democratic changes (after the 1998 elections) occurred at the same time. Thus, it is essential to consider the socioeconomic changes during the Chávez period to make an assessment on the quality of the Venezuelan democracy.

After the Debt Crisis of 1980s, the Venezuelan economy began to crash. The IMF's austerity programs were implemented by the Venezuelan government, and Venezuelan society became poorer. During the 1990s, half of Venezuela's population lived under the poverty threshold. After the 1998 elections, Hugo Chávez began to pursue a participatory democratic model by introducing socialist economic policies because he identified the former regime as elitist and oligarchical (McCoy and Myers, 2004: 286). Thus, a new participatory democratic system was introduced by the new government. The Constitution was changed, referendums and other types of elections were held, social rights were ensured and the socioeconomic status of Venezuelans improved greatly. Ignoring these socioeconomic improvements and their effects on Venezuelan democracy and only focusing on the political dimension understates the real situation in Venezuela. Thus, the main argument in this thesis concerns evaluating the relationship between the developments in the political and socioeconomic dimensions of democracy during the Chávez period and the interaction between the erosion of horizontal accountability institutions and the improvements in socioeconomic rights and equality and their effects on Venezuelan democracy.

There are two main contributions of this study to the democratization literature in the context of quality of democracy and empirical democracy analyses. The first contribution is the critical approach to the procedural democracy concept (especially in the case of Venezuela) and once again using socioeconomic factors in the empirical democracy literature because socioeconomic dimensions are assumed to indirectly influence the effectiveness of a democracy. The second contribution is the assessment of the Chávez period through a non-Western context. Until now, Hugo Chávez has largely been considered a populist or authoritarian leader, and his administration has been studied from this perspective (Jenga and Crandall, 2007, Gates, 2010, Mainwaring, 2012 etc.). Unlike those studies, this thesis is solely based on the empirical democratic literature and assesses the Chávez period by adopting Merkel's "embedded democracy" concept and extending this concept by analyzing the recovering socioeconomic status of Venezuelan society.

The three major conceptualizations used for empirical democracy analysis are the minimalist, middle-range and maximalist conceptualizations of democracy. Procedural conceptualizations include minimalist and middle-range conceptualizations, and their starting point is Dahl's Polyarchy (1971). Minimalist conceptualizations defined the minimum criteria for democratic regimes and were mostly used for empirical democracy analyses before the 1990s. After the 1990s, the unconsolidated nature of newly established democracies raised more questions; thus, scholars added new criteria and introduced middle-range conceptualizations, which also included only the political dimensions of a democracy, but in a more extended sense through the concepts of horizontal accountability, responsiveness, civilian control over the military and the balance of power as the new additional criteria (Schmitter and Karl, 1991). One of the major contributions to empirical democracy analyses was made by Merkel with the embedded democracy concept (2004). This concept departed from the middle-range conceptualizations by also including socioeconomic rights as an external partial regime. Unlike Merkel, some scholars included not only political aspects

but also social and economic aspects of democracy in their democracy conceptualizations. This approach represented the maximalist (substantive) conceptualization of democracy as the final conceptualization in empirical democracy analyses (O'Donnell, 2004a and Campbell, 2008). Substantive democracy is equally interested in the quality of democracy and the quality of society. Although there is no consensus regarding the different conceptualizations of democracy, socioeconomic status is important, particularly in the case of democracies in underdeveloped countries.

Almost all of the current democratic Latin American regimes inherited the socioeconomic problems of former authoritarian regimes. The poor economic conditions, poverty in society, income inequality, low rates of participation in elections, and lack of confidence in state officials affected the quality of democracies in Latin America. For this reason, the integration of the socioeconomic status of Venezuelans into democratic quality analyses of the country is very important, particularly for this study. As society became more educated, better informed and wealthier, the more the democratic quality increased (Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1997). Of course, increasing the quality of a society does not necessarily make the quality of democracy better; other democratic institutions and their consolidation are also very important.

Criticizing the existing quality of democracy literature is also important because it is heavily dependent on liberal economic principles (Merkel, 2004; Diamond and Morlino, 2005). These scholars include private property rights or individual rights as one of the main components of democracy. However, there is no direct relationship between the type of economic system in a country and the quality of its democratic regime. Venezuela adopted a socialist economic model under the Chávez presidency. Therefore, using liberal economic principles or individualism to analyze Venezuela's democratic quality would provide only part of the picture. To avoid such insufficient results, the liberal economic notion is excluded from

the middle-range democracy conceptualizations in this study. The four aspects of democracy—horizontal and vertical accountability, socioeconomic equality and social rights—are adopted for this study. The paradox between the political and socioeconomic dimensions of democracy in the case of Venezuela will be discussed using these dimensions as the main points of analysis for this study.

The 1998 elections ended the Punto Fijo democracy, and a new period of institutionalization began under the leadership of Hugo Chávez. Simon Bolívar's anti-imperialist notions and unionist American ideas were revitalized by Chávez as the dominant themes in his populist appeals to the people. Hugo Chávez's movement was based on the Bolivarian ideology. The effects of the Bolivarian ideology on Chavismo can be observed very clearly, even from the names of the crucial political institutions: The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Bolivarian Constitution, and Bolivarian Missions etc. These changes started with changing the Constitution through a referendum. Accordingly, with the new participatory democracy principles, society was included in the decision-making process through elections, referendums and community councils.

After winning the Mega Elections of 2000, Chávez announced his famous anti-neoliberal law package with the intention of pursuing a socialist economic model. This law package led to protests by the opposition, which consisted of former PDVSA executives (removed by the Chávez administration), the business association FEDECAMARAS and the trade union CTV. General strikes and a coup attempt (in 2002) followed these protests; however, Chávez stayed in power, and he even won a 2004 recall election that was demanded by the opposition. After the 2004 recall elections, President Chávez promulgated the disputed anti-neoliberal law package. In short, despite the objections of opposition groups, President Chávez started to implement his anti-neoliberal economic policies. These policies included nationalization policies (the largest oil company PDVSA, the telecommunications company CANTV, the electricity company

ELECTRICIDAD, etc.) and state-funded social missions that included free education and health care services. PDVSA has funded the social missions since that time. Meanwhile, the power and authority of the President were expanded over the years. The President obtained the power to dismantle the National Assembly, which appointed the judges to the Constitutional Court. These and other developments in subsequent years undermined both the checks and balances system and the horizontal accountability of elected officials in Venezuela.

Hence, this study examines the paradox of the democratic transformation in Venezuela during the Chávez period that arose from the tension between the weakening of the horizontal and vertical accountability mechanisms and improvements in socioeconomic rights and political participation. One can legitimately ask whether it would have been possible for President Chávez to promote socioeconomic equality without concentrating power in the executive by weakening democratic control mechanisms. Could the Chávez administration have improved socioeconomic rights through expanded and new participation channels for under-privileged groups without the billions in revenue from the PDVSA and without weakening or excluding the former oil elite? One may speculate on the answer to this question, but one can also claim that the increased social equality may have come at the cost of growing authoritarianism under a populist leader. However, rather than further pondering this question, this thesis examined the effects of those socioeconomic improvements on Venezuelan democracy, particularly in the case of the dimensions of participation and responsiveness, which were indeed quite impressive in terms of empirical indicators. In particular, the increased membership in trade unions and community councils, the increased election turnout and the establishment of a recall mechanism for the first time in Venezuela provide proof of the positive effects. However, these positive developments did not improve Venezuela's democracy quality because there were no functional democratic institutions and no effort made by the Chávez administration to provide more functional democratic institutions. In short, this study tries to explain this paradox.

It is argued here that if the link between participatory democracy and socioeconomic improvements had the support of vertical and horizontal accountability institutions, then Venezuela would have a more qualified democratic regime. However, the Chávez administration missed this opportunity, undermined the institutions of horizontal accountability and damaged Venezuelan democracy. The polarization within the society became severe during the Chávez administration, which created tension on the opposition side. However, there was undeniable progress on socioeconomic equality and social rights during this period. Through these improvements and the participatory democracy model, society's participation in politics increased, but the lack of necessary democratic institutions and the oppression of the opposition prevented the consolidation of democracy in Venezuela. However, there are different arguments regarding the relationship between semi-authoritarianism and socioeconomic improvements (McDill, 1961). Is it possible to improve a state's socioeconomic status without accumulating excessive executive power? Would the nationalization of the biggest companies in the country, overthrowing the former elite and redistributing the oil wealth have been possible with perfectly functioning horizontal accountability mechanisms? Was eliminating the horizontal accountability institutions a necessary tradeoff to improve the socioeconomic equality and social rights of Venezuelans? Studies related to these issues are expected in the future, particularly from comparative study analysts.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enformatik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Dinçer
Adı : Pelin Deniz
Bölümü : Latin ve Kuzey Amerika Çalışmaları

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : Venezuela Democracy in Transition:
Problematizing the Chávez Period

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: 13.02.2015

APPENDIX B: TURKISH SUMMARY

Bu tez çalışması Hugo Chávez'in başkan seçilmesi sonrasında Venezüella demokrasisindeki değişimi orta-prosedürel (middle-range) demokratik yaklaşım açısından analiz etmektedir. Gelişmiş batı ülkelerinin aksine Latin Amerika ülkeleri gibi gelişmekte olan ülkelerin tamamı sosyo-ekonomik problemlerle uğraşmakta ve demokratik yönetimlerini bu problemlerle birlikte konsolide etmeye çalışmaktadırlar. Sosyo-ekonomik problemlerini aşamamış ülkelerin demokratikleşme süreçleri gelişmiş ülkelerinkilerden farklıdır. Bu sebeple gelişmekte olan ülke demokrasileri analizleri o ülkelerin sosyo-ekonomik sorunları göz önüne alınarak yapılmalıdır, bu çalışmanın temel çıkış noktası budur. Bu sebeple Venezüella demokrasisinin politik boyutu ele alınırken, sosyo-ekonomik boyutu (eğitim, sağlık, yoksulluk sınırı vb. kıstaslar) da incelenecek, böylece Chávez dönemi Venezüella demokrasi kalitesi hakkında daha tutarlı bir analizin elde edilmesi amaçlanmıştır.

1999 – 2013 yılları arasında Venezüella'da sosyo-ekonomik şartlarda ciddi ilerlemeler kaydedilmiştir. Bu dönemde Venezüella'da yoksulluk sınırında yaşayanların sayısı önemli ölçüde azalmış (yüzde 60'lardan yüzde 10'lara gerilemiştir), kadın-erkek eşitliği konusunda önemli adımlar atılmıştır. Kamulaştırılan petrol şirketi PDVSA'nın sosyal yardımlara sağladığı milyarlarca dolar fon aracılığıyla eğitim, sağlık hizmetleri ücretsiz hale getirilmiş, konut yardımları yapılmış ve iş eğitim kursları açılmıştır. Bu olumlu gelişmelerin yanında bu dönemde özellikle yatay hesap verilebilirlik kurumları zarar görmüş, liberal demokrasinin en önemli kavramlarından kuvvetler dengesi zarar görmüş, Chávez'in ülke başkanı olarak yetkileri artarken yargı ve yasama organlarının bağımsızlığı tartışmalı hale gelmiştir. Bu çalışma, Chávez döneminin tüm bu olumlu ve olumsuz gelişmelerinin Venezüella demokrasi kalitesine etkilerini analiz etmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın eleştirel demokrasi ve demokrasi kalitesi analizleri bağlamında demokratikleşme literatürüne iki ana katkısı bulunmaktadır. Eleştirel demokrasi literatüründe, özellikle de demokrasiye geçiş süreci çalışmalarında, minimal-prosedürel demokrasi kavramsallaştırması daha yaygın kullanılır. Minimal demokrasilerin ölçüm kriterleri Dahl'ın poliyarşi kavramından faydalanır. Bir rejimin demokrasi sayılabilmesi için gerekli olan minimum kriter Dahl tarafından belirlenmiş ve dikey hesap verilebilirlik kurumlarının konsolidasyonu ve düşünce ve ifade özgürlüğü bağlamında belirlenmiştir. Ancak bu minimum kriterler uzun yıllar önce demokratik rejime geçiş yapmış ancak hala konsolide olamamış demokrasilerin analizlerinde yetersiz sonuçlar vermektedir. Özellikle Venezüella gibi gelişmekte olan ülkelerin sosyo-ekonomik sorunları ve demokrasi-ekonomik refah ilişkisi göz önüne alındığında bu durum daha net görülebilmektedir. Bu tezin ana argümanlarından biri Venezüella demokrasisi söz konusu olduğunda sosyo-ekonomik gelişmelerin göz ardı edilmesi ile fotoğrafın sadece bir kısmının görülebileceğidir. Sosyo-ekonomik politikaların demokratik rejimin gelişimine katkısı birçok yazar tarafından analiz edilmiştir.

Merkel, içyerleşik demokrasi (embedded democracy) modeli ile orta-prosedürel kavramsallaştırmayı kullanmış, sosyo-ekonomik etkenleri ise dışsal çerçevede de olsa demokratikleşme analizlerine dahil etmiştir. Bu tez çalışmasında ise Merkel'in içyerleşik demokrasi modelinden hareket edilecek ancak sosyo-ekonomik etkenler içsel çerçevede değerlendirilecektir. Kısaca Merkel'in aksine bu çalışmada sosyo-ekonomik faktörler demokrasinin gelişimine “doğrudan” katkıda bulunduğu savıyla hareket edilecektir. Zira gelişmiş ülkelerin aksine, gelişmekte olan ülkelerde demokratik rejimler ağır sosyo-ekonomik şartların yaşandığı dönemlerde kurulmuştur. Gelişmiş ülkeler ise demokrasilerine sosyo-ekonomik ve sosyal haklarla ilgili problemlerini çözdükten sonra geçmiştir. Bu sebeple batı merkezli demokratik rejimler incelenirken (Almanya, Kanada, İngiltere gibi) sosyo-ekonomik şartların incelenmesi analiz açısından eksiklik oluşturmasa da gelişmekte olan ülkeler için durum böyle değildir. Chávez'in iktidara geldiği yıllarda Venezüella halkının yüzde 60'ından fazlası yoksulluk

sınırı altında, yüzde 30'a yakını da açlık sınırı altında yaşamaktaydı. Fakirlik, eğitimsizlik ve eşitsizlikle bu derece iç içe olan bir halkın demokrasi anlayışı şüphesiz gelişmiş ülke halklarından farklı olacaktır. Kısaca Kanada ve Venezüella'nın demokratik kalitesi incelenirken çok farklı demokratik ölçütler ele alınmalıdır. Bu sebeple gelişmekte olan ülkelerin demokrasi analizlerine sosyo-ekonomik ölçütün de eklenmesi elzemdir. Çünkü sosyo-ekonomik faktörlerin özellikle demokratik katılım, cevap ve hesap verilebilirlik ölçütlerine etkisine yadsınamaz. Ancak Venezüella örneğinde sosyo-ekonomik gelişmelerin, yatay hesap verilebilirlik kurumlarındaki aşınmalarla aynı zamana denk gelmesi, Chávez hükümetinin sosyal yardımları arttırdığı ölçüde, Devlet Başkanının gücünü ve yetkilerini de artırması, ülkedeki sosyo-ekonomik gelişmelerin ülke demokrasisine etkisini azaltmıştır. Bu zıtlık ve aralarındaki ters orantılı ilişki bu tezin çıkış noktasını oluşturmaktadır.

Hugo Chávez bazı yazarlar tarafından popülist-otoriter bir lider olarak tanımlanmıştır. Buna kanıt olarak da Chávez'in popülist politikalarını ve devlet başkanının artan yetkilerini göstermişlerdir. Chávez'in liderliği çokça sorgulanmış ve çalışılmıştır. 21. Yüzyıl Sosyalizm modelinden, Chávez'in karakterine, petrol politikalarından popülizme birçok konuda çalışma bulunmakta ise de bu dönemdeki demokratik değişiklik ve Chávez dönemi demokrasisinin Venezüella'nın daha önceki demokratik dönemlerinden farkını inceleyen analizler yok denecek kadar azdır.

1998 Başkanlık seçimleri ile Venezüella'da yeni bir demokratik dönem başlamıştır. 1998 seçimleri ile Chávez devlet başkanı olarak seçilmiş, eski demokratik sistem çökmüş, yeni bir anayasa ile yeni bir demokratik sistem inşa edilmiştir. 1999 Bolivarcı Anayasası devlet başkanına önemli yetkiler vermiştir. Bu yetkiler ise ülkedeki kuvvetler dengesini bozmuştur. Örneğin Başkan'a meclisi feshetme hakkı verilmiş, yargı bağımsızlığının en önemli kurumu olan Anayasa Mahkemesine atamaları meclis gerçekleştirmeye başlamıştır. Böylece hem yasama hem de yargının bağımsızlığı zarar görmüştür. Anayasanın değişiminden

hemen sonra, 2000 yılında Mega seçimler düzenlenmiş ve bu seçimler sonucunda Başkanlıktan meclise, belediyelerden valiliklere tüm siyasi kurumlar Chávez'in oluşturduğu koalisyon olan MVR'nin eline geçmiştir. Bu seçim zaferinden sonra eski demokratik sistemin kurucuları ile Chávez yönetimi arasında çatışmalar başlamış ve 2002 yılında Chávez'i devirmeye yönelik darbe girişimi ile toplumsal kutuplaşma üst seviyelere çıkmıştır. Ancak Chávez bu çatışmalardan galip çıkmış ve 2004 yılında sosyal misyonları hayata geçirmiş, 2006 yılından sonra da temsili demokrasi modeli yerine katılımcı demokrasi modelini uygulamaya başlamıştır.

Ekonomik anlamda ise tıpkı siyasi düzlemde olduğu gibi köklü değişikliklere gidilmiştir. Özellikle 2004 yılından sonra büyük şirketler kamulaştırılmaya başlanmış, Venezüella'da bulunan dünyanın beşinci büyük petrol şirketi PDVSA'nın büyük kontrolü devletin eline geçmiştir. Bunun yanında telekomünikasyon şirketlerinden elektrik şirketlerine birçok şirket de kamulaştırılmıştır. ABD'nin Afganistan ve Irak işgallerinden sonra artan petrol fiyatları Venezüella ekonomisine büyük katkılarda bulunmuş, PDVSA'nın devlet kontrolüne alınması ile de halka aktarılan sosyal yardımlar artmıştır. Dolayısıyla bu yardımlar Chávez yönetimine halkın desteğini arttırmıştır. Bunun yanında bu sosyal yardımlar yerel konseyler aracılığıyla dağıtılmış, her mahallede bir yerel konsey oluşturulmuştur. Bu konseylerde ise eski demokratik sistem tarafından dışlanmış Venezüella halkının fakir kesimi ilk kez aktif olarak siyasete katılmış, katılımcı demokrasi modeli en çok bu yerel konseyler aracılığı ile uygulanmıştır. Mahalle ile ilgili alınacak her karar yerel mecliste halk oylamasına sunulmakta, oylamadan sonra ise devlet fonu yardımı ile bu kararlar hayata geçirilmektedir.

Venezüella'da Chávez öncesi dönemin demokrasisi pakt demokrasisi olarak da adlandırılır. Venezüella'da ilk demokratik rejim 1958 yılında Punto Fijo paktı ile kurulmuştur. Bu pakt ile ülkenin elitleri aralarında demokratik rejimi destekleyeceklerine dair aralarında anlaşmaya varmış ve 40 yıl sürecek pakt demokrasisi dönemi başlamıştır. Bu dönemde sadece iki parti, Demokratik Hareket (AD) ve Hristiyan Demokrat Parti (COPEI) ülke demokrasisinde söz

sahibi olmuştur. 70'li yılların sonunda uygulanmaya başlayan neoliberal politikaların etkisi ile halk iyice fakirleşmiş, siyasetten soyutlanmıştır. 80'li yılların sonunda ülkede protestolar gittikçe artmış, 1989 Caracazo ayaklanmasında polis ve askeri güçlerin 2 bine yakın protestocuyu öldürmesi sonucunda pakt demokrasisi çökmüştür. Chávez'in seçiminin ve bu derece halk desteği almasının en önemli sebebi 40 yıl süren eski demokratik süreçtir. Chávez'in geniş halk desteğini, sosyalist ekonomi politikalarını, bu süreçte artan sosyal refahı görmezden gelerek yapılan demokrasi analizleri bu yüzden eksik kalmaktadır.

Eleştirel demokrasi analizlerinde kullanılan üç farklı kavramsallaştırma vardır; minimal-prosedürel, orta-prosedürel ve süstantif kavramsallaştırma. 20. Yüzyılın eleştirel demokrasi analizlerinde 1990'lı yıllara kadar Dahl'ın poliyarşi modeli kullanılmıştır. Böyle bir rejimi demokratik olarak adlandırabilecek minimum kriterler belirlenmiştir. Ancak 1990'lı yıllarda üçüncü dalga demokrasilerinin halen konsolide olamamış olması, literatürü demokratik rejime geçişten demokratik kalite analizlerine yönlendirmiştir. Bu analizler sonucunda demokrasinin düzenli, adil ve tekrarlayan seçimler ile ifade özgürlüğünden çok daha fazla olduğu görüşü ortaya çıkmış ve orta-prosedürel ve süstantif demokrasi analizleri ortaya çıkmaya başlamıştır.

Orta-prosedürel demokrasi analizleri Karl tarafından 1990 yılında ortaya atılmıştır. Bu tür analizlerde minimum kriter değil demokrasi için yeterli olan kriterler kullanılmaktadır. Düzenli, adil ve tekrarlayan seçimler dışında hesap verilebilirlik, güçler dengesi, hukukun üstünlüğü, seçilmiş hükümetin vesayet altında olmaması, cevap verilebilirlik gibi birçok yeni ölçüt bu tür analizlerde kullanılmaya başlanmıştır ancak sosyo-ekonomik durum yine analiz dışında bırakılmıştır, prosedürel demokrasi analizlerinin süstantif analizlerden temel farkını zaten bu oluşturur. 2004 yılında ise Merkel orta-prosedürel demokrasi literatürüne içeyerleşik demokrasi modeli ile önemli bir katkıda bulunmuştur.

Karl'ın kriterleri dışında dış etkenleri de analizlerine eklemiş, sosyo-ekonominin demokrasi üzerine doğrudan olmayan etkisini kabul etmiştir.

Prosedürel demokrasi analizlerinden farklı olarak süstantif demokrasi analizleri sosyo-ekonomik gelişmeleri, eşitliği ve sosyal hakları analizlerinin temelini koyarlar böylece sadece politik değil aynı zamanda ekonomik ve sosyal alanlarda da demokrasiyi analiz eder diğer analizlerden çok daha kapsamlı sonuçlara ulaşırlar. Süstantif analizlerde toplumun kalitesi ile demokrasi kalitesi arasında kesin ve doğru orantılı bir ilişki vardır. O'Donnell süstantif demokrasi analizlerinde bireyi merkeze koymuş, bireyin sosyo-ekonomik durumundan eğitimine birçok kriterin ülke demokrasisini etkileyeceğini savunmuştur.

Tüm bu bilgiler ışığında Chávez dönemi Venezüella demokrasisi orta-prosedürel demokrasi analizleri bağlamında ele alınacak ancak Merkel'in aksine sosyo-ekonomik faktörler içsel bir etken olarak analize dahil edilecektir. Zira batı demokrasilerinden farklı olarak gelişmekte olan ülke demokrasileri halen sosyo-ekonomik problemlerle uğraşmaktadır ve bu problemler bu ülkelerdeki demokratik rejimlerin konsolide olmasını engellemektedir. Ayrıca orta-prosedürel demokrasiler "liberal demokrasi" modelinden yola çıkmıştır ancak Venezüella daha önce de belirtildiği üzere "katılımcı demokrasi" modelini uygulamaya başlamıştır. Son olarak orta-prosedürel demokrasi analizi kriterlerinden liberal ekonomi prensipleri Venezüella demokrasisi analizlerine dahil edilmeyecektir. Zira bir ülkenin ekonomik sisteminin o ülkenin demokrasisine olumlu yada olumsuz etkisi olduğu henüz kesinleşmemiştir. Sosyalist bir ekonomi politikası yürüten Chávez yönetimini liberal ekonomi prensipleri ile analiz etmek (Venezüella'da özel sektörün durumu ve haklarının Venezüella demokrasisine etkisi gibi) tutarlı sonuçlar vermeyecektir.

Kısaca bu tez çalışmasında Venezüella Devlet Başkanı Hugo Chávez'in yönetimi dönemindeki (1999 – 2013) demokratik değişim orta-prosedürel demokratik

yaklaşım çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın temel amaçlarından biri, sosyo-ekonomik faktör ve sosyal hakların demokrasi kalitesi analizine tekrar dâhil edilmesidir. Başkan Chávez döneminde ortaya çıkan demokratik paradoks, bu çalışmanın temel argümanını oluşturmaktadır. 1998 yılından 2013 yılına kadar devam eden demokratik süreç boyunca Venezüella’da sosyo-ekonomik şartlar ve sosyal haklar konularında pek çok ilerleme kaydedildiği halde dikey ve yatay hesap verilebilirlik kurumları zarar görmüştür. Chávez dönemi demokrasisini analiz etmek için orta-prosedürel demokratik yaklaşım kullanılmıştır çünkü minimal-prosedürel demokratik yaklaşım gelişmekte olan ülke demokrasilerinin analizinde yetersiz kalmaktadır. Bu dönem boyunca Venezüella demokrasisi pakt demokrasisinden katılımcı demokrasiye geçmiştir. Katılımcı demokrasi modeli ile Venezüella halkının daha önceki yönetimlerde dışlanmış kesimleri, tekrar demokratik sisteme entegre edilmiştir. Ancak bu dönemde hesap verilebilirlik kurumları ciddi derecede zarar görmüştür. Bu yüzden sosyo-ekonomik gelişmeler Venezüella demokrasi kalitesini beklenen şekilde olumlu etkileyememiştir.

Sonuç olarak bu çalışma ile öncelikle eleştirel demokrasi ve demokratik kalite literatürünü tartışarak teorik bir altyapı oluşturulacaktır. Ardından Venezüella siyasi tarihi hakkında bilgiler verilerek Chávez öncesi dönem incelenecek ve tartışılacaktır. Özellikle 80’li yıllardan sonraki ekonomik ve toplumsal değişimler ile Chávez yönetiminin iktidara gelmesi arasındaki bağlantı önem arz etmektedir. Daha sonra Chávez döneminin siyasi, sosyo-ekonomik özellikleri analiz edilecek ve bu dönemin sosyalist ekonomi politikaları yada katılımcı demokrasi modeli gibi özelliklerinden bahsedilerek Chávez’in politik ve sosyo-ekonomik uygulamaları Latinobarometro, Democracy Ranking, Dünya Bankası, Venezüella Merkez Bankası ve çeşitli bakanlıklarının bilgilerine dayanılarak aktarılacaktır. Çalışmanın en önemli kısmını ise Chávez dönemi uygulamalarının eleştirel demokrasi analizleri açısından yorumlanması oluşturmaktadır. Bu bölümde de yatay ve dikey hesap verilebilirlik kavramları ve sosyo-ekonomik eşitlik ve sosyal hakların Chávez yönetimi uygulamaları çerçevesinde incelenmesi yapılacaktır. Bu çalışmada Chávez yönetiminin hesap verilebilirlik kurumlarına zarar verdiği bu

sebeple ÷lkedeki sosyo-ekonomik geliřmelerin Venezüella demokrasisine beklenildiđi kadar olumlu yansımadiđı ancak katılımcı demokrasi modelinin Venezüella'da çok başarılı olduđu ve yıllarca dışlanmış kesimlerin ilk kez Chávez döneminde ÷lke demokrasisine etkin olarak katıldıđı sonucuna ulařılmıştır.