

Democratization



Year 2, Issue 8

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Edited by Instituto FORMA

Introduction

The eighth issue of *Democratization* magazine includes articles by Elsa Cardozo, Rogelio Pérez Perdomo and Alejandro Motta. The three authors delve into issues that contribute to understanding the Venezuelan problem and offer keys for political action. Below, we present a brief summary of each article.

“Between authoritarian and democratic learning” by Elsa Cardozo is an essay that analyzes and specifies the autocratic learnings that the Chavista revolution has accumulated for twenty years. We must highlight its methodological rigor, as well as the capacity for synthesis that accounts for the learning and repertoires that the dictatorship employs every time it faces what the author calls “moments of challenge”. Faced with this reality of continuous improvement, Cardozo invites us to engage in “the democratic challenge”, which consists of “correctly diagnosing the moment and its repertoires, taking into account the risks of moving away from rationality to those induced by extreme stress in the midst of a situation as critical, in so many ways, as the Venezuelan one”.

“Social cohesion and political transformation” by Rogelio Pérez Perdomo delves into the relationship between anomie and the depth of political change that the country will demand. The author wonders how connected Venezuelan society and the State are. He identifies that it is a reality that deserves to be studied in depth and highlights the existence of informal institutions that, even in the midst of collapse, give a certain order to human relationships. He concludes by stating that in the future “the State,

and especially the entire apparatus of repression, needs to be renewed and reeducated”.

“Populism and the media” by Alejandro Motta is an essay that identifies the theoretical keys that help to understand the interaction between the populist phenomenon and the media. The author distinguishes between populism and authoritarianism, reviews the anti-system discourse that characterizes the phenomenon, and identifies the internet as a threat and opportunity for populism. Motta is a member of FORMA and is currently completing his doctoral studies at the University of Navarra.

Venezuela: between authoritarian and democratic learning

Elsa Cardozo

If democratic ideas can spread and people can learn tactics to overcome authoritarian regimes, then why cannot authoritarian regimes reciprocate and learn how to overcome democratic protests?¹

Seeking and finding common features –whether many or just a few– between the political regime of Venezuela and those of countries as diverse as Cuba, Nicaragua, Russia and even China or Iran is no longer strange for us. It is not only interesting to find similarities in specific policies or certain organizational principles within their diversity; but also, and much more so, to behold the common learnings that these regimes have cultivated and shared, which have allowed them to prevail.

1 Stephen Hall in *Can authoritarian regimes learn? The cases of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine* (Tesis, MARES-Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, 2014), 57, available in: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303250628_CAN_AUTHORITARIAN_REGIMES_LEARN_THE_CASES_OF_BELARUS_KAZAKHSTAN_RUSSIA_AND_UKRAINE

Taking two previous articles² as a general frame of reference, these pages explore the traits of authoritarian resilience of the Venezuelan regime, which can be analyzed as a result of learnings from national experience and, especially, from other international experiences and incidents. Once the environment and the conceptual approaches to autocratic learnings have been characterized, learned repertoires will be identified and characterized in order to finally explore some challenges for democratic relearning.

1. Revolutions, springs and tides: beyond coincidence

The political processes in which leaders elected under democratic, or potentially democratic, rule became agents of autocratization in their exercise of power multiplied within the first two decades of the 21st century. Such is the case of Venezuela, so widely referred to in the media and academic literature. These regimes proliferated amid a sustained global regression of democracies, developing a repertoire of strategies –such as goal setting, resource management and attention to critical relationships– to respond to pro-democratic, national and international pressures, warnings and persuasive incentives. Thus, they strengthened their capacity to resist and developed consolidation strategies. The recent evolution of studies on what characterizes and sustains contemporary authoritarianisms internationally can be considered, on the one hand, from the perspective of the common grounds with other international approaches to democratization processes and their initiation,

2 “Democratización y resiliencia autoritaria: oportunidades del desafío y riesgos de la permisividad,” *Democratización* 1, no. 3 (2019): 87-115 and “La resiliencia autoritaria y la causa democrática venezolana: Recursos y asimetrías,” *Democratización* 2, no. 5 (2020): 4-30.

strengthening and consolidation in different moments. On the other hand, it is essential to consider them from what is specific and immeasurable to the promotion of democracy with authoritarian patronage³.

The first investigations about foreign impact on democratization processes granted it little importance and considered it as always mediated by national actors. Later, it was understood as direct and decisive influence, and, finally, as complex processes of democratic influence acting through initiatives that combined internal and external interests. The analysis of the wave of autocratization that was spreading in the post Cold War period incorporated with increasing refinement the role of national actors in terms of their international connections, the environment of democratic recession and the more or less visible incidence of authoritarianism in its desire to protect and strengthen itself through the development of international affinities and support. Now, specifically, the persistence of authoritarianisms has also meant defensive learning from the experiences of democratizing advances that have displaced autocratic governments, and offensive learning from the containment and repression of democratic opponents, from the erosion of democratic practices and institutions, internal and external, and from the strengthening of their hold on power. If the former has been learned from the so-called “Color Revolutions”, the latter has been learned from the “Arab Spring” experience. The so-called Latin American “Pink Tide”, between the first decade of this century and the beginning

3 Christian von Soest, “Democracy prevention: The international collaboration of authoritarian regimes”, *European Journal of Political Research* 54 (2015): 623–638. Available in: <https://ejpr.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1475-6765.12100>

of the second, combines the two facets in its peculiarity, and Venezuela holds a central role in both.

It is convenient to dwell on these three sets or waves of events that have been inspiring studies and methodological refinements on autocratic learnings since the beginning of the 21st century.

The Color Revolutions, which took place between 2000 and 2010 in the periphery of Russia –between Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus⁴– had a finely complex balance. The *Bulldozer* revolutions in Serbia (2000) with the *Otpor* movement, the Rose revolution in Georgia (2003) with the *Kmara*, Orange with the *Pora* in Ukraine (2004) and the Tulips with the *Kelkel* in Kyrgyzstan (2005) were all successful. Instead, the movements of Armenia, Moldova, Uzbekistan, the *Yox* of Azerbaijan and the *Zubr* of Belarus failed. Those who achieved significant political changes had external support, which deserve to be observed regarding learnings: such as the impulses for democratic diffusion and the responses from the interests in authoritarian preservation encouraged by Russia. Indeed, Moscow argued there was Western interference in order to deny the national reasons for the chain of protests in ex-communist spaces, which had in common the domestic demand for compliance with constitutional rules. On the other hand, the conjunction of the external with the internal was present in the environmental conditions that encouraged the different revolutions⁵: States whose performance was perceived

4 Larry Diamond, "Authoritarian Learning: Lessons from the colored revolutions", *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 12, no. 2, (2006): 215-222. Available in: https://www.jstor.org/stable/24590631?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

5 Valery Solovei, "Color Revolutions and Russia," *Democracy in a Russian Mirror*, ed. Adam Przeworski (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 78-94. Available in: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/>

by the elites and the general population as inefficient and unfair, as well as the development of fraudulent elections which led to protests; elites' resistance to support the regime, preferring to search for alternatives to solve the political crisis; economic difficulties due to deterioration of living conditions or unsatisfied expectations of progress; alliance between part of the elites and the population against the regime; aspirations for justice and freedom that articulated actions against the government; and, finally, external influence, which did not manifest itself as a direct incidence but as a sociocultural influence and as a model –an inspiring image of almost all revolutions, except in Kyrgyzstan– no longer only from the democratic West but from the experiences of the “Velvet Revolutions” or the “fourth wave” between 1989 and 1991⁶.

In general, the internal social organization included the leading role of social movements and young people, mass non-violent protests linked to electoral processes (mostly against fraudulent elections), and demands for free and fair elections as a way to democratization.

The subsequent balance was not the best, due to the leaders' loss of power and organizations promoting change, due to failures in government performance and, not least important, due to the

aop-cambridge-core/content/view/ABEE0CE0F9250BF47F5AB4F516C5F087/9781107282070c4_p78-94_CBO.pdf/color_revolutions_and_russia.pdf

6 In a few months, between August and December 1989, there were the successive falls of the regimes of Poland, Hungary, the collapse of the Berlin Wall (and the following year the end of the German Democratic Republic with the union with Federal Germany), the end of communist regimes also in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania, followed by Albania in 1990, and by the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991 after the death of its unifier, Josip Broz Tito.

political and security reasons that mobilized the Russian regime. Thus, the geopolitics that played in favor of these revolutions turned against regimes that, aside from their internal performance deficiencies, failed to develop a *modus vivendi* with Moscow or between Russia and Europe or in any multilateral instance, nor effective alliances that compensated their ability to set in motion the strategic interests of the neighboring power. Its most violent manifestation took place years later and undoubtedly for very specific geopolitical and domestic reasons, which was the intervention of Ukraine followed by the annexation of Crimea.

In this process, studies on authoritarian learnings have conjectured about learning in the sequence of revolutions from the similarities in their development and organization. Those of the Russian regime have deserved special attention, disseminated to their allied regimes⁷. These lessons were translated into practice in restrictive and repressive measures against independent civil society and its organizations, as well as against the opposition, its parties and militants; in limitations on the freedoms and transparency of electoral powers and blockades of the presence of independent international electoral observers. This was accompanied by the delegitimization of the arguments and positions of the Color Revolutions and in the pro-democratic demonstrations and organizations. Pro-government demonstrations were organized to counteract opposition protests, as well as political, diplomatic and practical support offered to autocratic international allies. References to security threats from Color Revolutions instigated from the West were frequent, using

7 Stephen Hall, "Can authoritarian regimes learn? The cases of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine" (Presented for MARES Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, 2014), 78-80.

intensive media and broadcast platforms under government control⁸.

About a decade later, between 2010 and 2012, there was a succession of protests in 16 countries in North Africa and the Middle East known as the Arab Spring. It was plagued with failures and sustained conflict with the exception of Tunisia: from the military coup that toppled Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, the brief electoral mandate of the Muslim Brotherhood government and the stabilization of the militarized regime that toppled him, to the protracted civil conflagrations and wars in Libya, before and after the overthrow of Muammar el Gaddafi, and in Syria the support of the Bashar al-Assad regime⁹. Electoral processes played very different roles in the stabilizations of Tunisia and Egypt. In Tunisia, where the sequence of protests began, the economic, political and religious problems that followed the resignation of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, two free elections and constitutional changes were resolved through institutional channels, although not exempt from fragility. The continuity of association agreements with the European Union and participation as an observer in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization affected the matter as external incentives for the political and economic stability of this country. On the other hand, in Egypt, after overthrowing the democratically elected government of Mohamed Morsi, General Abdel Fatah al Sisi legitimized his power electorally in 2013 and in

8 Krišjānis Bušs, "Russia Stirs Fear of Color Revolutions," in *Democracy Speaks* (International Republican Institute Blog, 2019). Available in: <https://www.democracyspeaks.org/blog/russia-stirs-fear-color-revolutions>; Stephen Hall, "Can authoritarian regimes learn? The cases of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine" (Presented for MARES Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, 2014), 81-82.

9 Tarek Masoud, Andrew Reynolds, Jason Brownlee, "Tracking the `Arab Spring`: Why the Modest Harvest?," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 4 (2013): 29-44.

March 2018 he was re-elected, although through another a shady process, protested by the opposition, with low participation, but with no significant international democratic response.

The rapid spread of the protests from Morocco to Bahrain has generally been analyzed based on economic and socio-political commonalities, as well as considering the spreading of the phenomenon between societies facilitated by the rapid diffusion of ideas, discourses and practices, which meant adaptations and applications that exhibited remarkable similarities. While the sequence and repertoire of protests and demands for socio-political changes manifested democratic diffusion or contagion, an aspect less studied has been the development of a governmental repertoire of responses that reflected the lessons learned from the experience of previous countries. Adjustments to its resources and means to the dynamics of the protests and the direction of regional and international trends were evidenced¹⁰.

From the authoritarian repertoire disseminated at the time, the following guidelines and measures have been highlighted¹¹: Preventing internal divisions in the regime, especially in the military sector; Entrusting repression to proven loyal forces and improving economic conditions to key military actors; Developing and disseminating messages aimed at affecting the strategic calculations of citizens who would participate in protests to increase their fears, warning of the costs and personal risks as well as the negative consequences –violence, disorder, economic destruction– of displacing the government; Applying strategies in the fields of diplomacy and international security supporting

10 Steven Heydemann & Reinoud Leenders, "Authoritarian Learning and Authoritarian Resilience: Regime Responses to the «Arab Awakening»", *Globalizations* 8, no. 5 (octubre 2011):647-653.

11 Taken from Heydemann & Leenders, 649-650.

counterrevolutionary actors and discouraging the expression of criticism and punitive measures from external adversaries; Monitoring the fate of their ousted regional counterparts to assess the likelihood of negotiating an exit strategy that would ultimately offer amnesties and thus partial withholding of accumulated assets. Besides, related regional regimes converged, by March 2011, around measures to increase their likelihood of permanence, recognizing the weight of nearby key actors (Saudi Arabia and Iran) in the uneven results of the protests in Syria and Bahrain, in the use of the resistance of the United States to intervene and, particularly after the experience in Libya, in the stopped actions of the members of NATO, the powers and the Security Council, the discursive framing of the protests as generators of chaos (Fitna), the strategic calculations in the use of repression to keep it within thresholds that would not increase the international costs of repression and, finally, the analysis of the possibility of developing acceptable exit strategies that gradually lost interest after measures were taken to displace leaders.

Moreover, to clarify the approach of authoritarian learning and bring it closer to the Venezuelan case, in the heterogeneous Latin American “pink tide” there are diffusion elements. This tide, of various reddish tones depending on the degree of political antiliberalism and economic nationalization, showed itself with the successive elections of Hugo Chávez (1999), Alberto Kirchner (2003), Evo Morales and Manuel Zelaya (2006), and Daniel Ortega (2007); on another scale Luiz I. Lula da Silva (2003), Fernando Lugo (2008) and Rafael Correa (2009), as well as more lightly Tabaré Vázquez (2005), Mauricio Funes (2009) and Ollanta Humala (2011); outside of the tide, with barely a pragmatic relationship with it, Michele Bachelet (2009).

At least three contrasting features of this set should be noted –which due to its heterogeneity and duration was not configured or consolidated as a “wave”– in relation to the conditions of authoritarian learnings extended from the sequences in the Russian periphery and in North Africa and the Middle East. First, these political processes in Latin America were a critical answer to the performance of democracies, in an unequal balance between the demand for efficiency and that of re-founding its legitimacy. The government of Hugo Chávez increasingly and openly positioned itself at the extreme of illegitimacy and national and international neglect of fundamental democratic principles, agreements and commitments. Furthermore, it actively took on the task of internationally encouraging their weakening and neglect. The second distinguishing feature is the geographical proximity to a democratic power and to countries in which democracy –at least in terms of the possibility of alternation and legislative counterweights– was demonstrating its resilience. This has been the case in Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, El Salvador, Ecuador and Bolivia since 2013. Thirdly, there is a primordial and great learning process in countries that more extremely abandoned democratic principles and practices, which was to promote the people’s protagonism and participation –in elections and consultations– yet increasingly restricted pluralism, the democratic legitimacy of the exercise of power, and ultimately degraded the electoral moment itself (e.g. Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia).

In Venezuela, the lessons for the maintenance and consolidation of an increasingly closed authoritarian regime have become more visible. With the arrival of Hugo Chávez to power, there has been a well-known journey by which purposes, strategies and policies were outlined, which alienated the nation from other

democratic actors and commitments and brought it closer to alliances and strategic links which not only diversely challenged the international liberal order but legitimized authoritarianism in its most extreme versions, that finally gave way to national autocratization. Amid growing national and international pressures for the restoration of democracy, strategies and policies were acquired to overcome pressures and regain sustainability. Such learnings came from their own experiences, before and during the governments of Chávez and Maduro, and from other people's repertoires, as has been the advice of the Cuban regime expressly invited and admitted. They have been a fundamental influence, but not the only school, as the lessons sketched from the Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring suggest. Before exploring the autocratic learnings in the Venezuelan case, with special reference to Cuba, it is convenient to introduce some details about this approach, its limitations and possibilities.

2. Autocratic learnings and repertoires: Venezuela

The three sets of cases introduced in the previous section offer relevant examples to approach the question of learnings in general and specifically in regards to the Venezuelan case, which, as previously indicated, incorporates both useful learning in the face of democratizing pressures, as well as its complement in learning to encourage an international environment favorable to authoritarian permanence. Furthermore, and of the utmost importance, they are useful references to assess democratic learnings and adjust their repertoires.

Imitation, adaptation and innovation of repertoires

Successful strategy and policy innovation in one state¹² often encourages adoption in other states or at another time within the same state¹³. Learning refers to the emulation or adaptation of innovations in ideas, methods and policy solutions on the basis of its legitimacy or efficacy, usually a degree of both in different proportions. Then there is the issue of how a nation learns from its own successes and failures and internationally from what it believes it should emulate or avoid and what it should innovate or adapt to¹⁴. It is equally interesting and relevant to consider the promoters and carriers of the ideas and strategies, whether people, groups or more or less institutionalized organizations, through links and influence on leaders and governments.

The so-called means or mechanisms that contribute to international autocratic learnings have included: the **diffusion** or effect of contagion or imitation, **collaboration** with elites, **pressure** through negative and positive incentives that the state exerts on the elites seeking to adopt support measures or authoritarian

12 Cecilia Osorio & José M. Vergara, "La difusión de políticas públicas. Estado del arte y contribuciones para la disciplina en América Latina," *Revista de Ciencia Política* 54, no. 2 (2016): 235-254. Available in: <https://revistapolitica.uchile.cl/index.php/RP/article/view/44806/46883>

13 Rachel Varderhill, "Learning to Be Bad: How Autocratic Leaders Adopt Strategies from Abroad to Maintain Power" (Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, New Orleans, 2012). Available in: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2108791

14 Stephen Hall, *Developing the Concept of Authoritarian Learning* (Thesis presented in the MRES Politics and Economics of Eastern Europe, 2015). Available in: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303250392_Developing_the_Concept_of_Authoritarian_Learning#fullTextFileContent

consolidation¹⁵. Additionally, the idea of contagion has been refined through the consideration of interactions, **linkages** with authoritarian actors that have **leverage**¹⁶. The notion of pressure has advanced to include the use of **soft power** by those authoritarian actors that, in their increasingly characteristically authoritarian version, are then considered **sharp power**¹⁷, a kind of “anti-democratic toolbox”¹⁸ or “manipulation menu”¹⁹ containing policies and practices aimed at weakening and displacing democratic institutions and practices. **Learning**, which is one of the forms of dissemination of authoritarian policies and tools or repertoires, and the concept that fundamentally concerns

15 Rachel Varderhill, “Learning to Be Bad...” and *Promoting Authoritarianism Abroad* (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2015).

16 Based on the concepts that, were introduced by Steven Levitsky & Lucan A. Way to explain the strategies of maintenance of competitive authoritarianisms in “The rise of competitive authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy*, 13, no. 2 (2002): 51-56; *Competitive Authoritarianism. Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

17 The means of soft power are public diplomacy, radio broadcasts, exchange programs, economic, technical and military assistance, counseling, support in emergency situations, cultural promotion and links with civil society: Joseph Nye, “Soft Power”, *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990): 153-171 and *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011). For sharp power, these are accompanied by more invasive and technologically developed resources to contribute to social and political control: Christopher Walker & Jessica Ludwig, “The Meaning of Sharp Power. How Authoritarian States Project Influence”, *Foreign Affairs* (noviembre, 2017). Available in: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2017-11-16/meaning-sharp-power>

18 Christopher Walker, “Dealing with the Authoritarian Resurgence”, en *Authoritarianism Goes Global. The Challenge to Democracy*, ed. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner & Christopher Walker (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).

19 Andreas Schedler, “Elections Without Democracy: The Menu of Manipulation”, *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (2002): 36-50.

this paper, can be incorporated in their development of emulation and adaptation to all or some of these media²⁰.

Most importantly, ultimately, strategies and tactics are adopted to resist and impose, learned to sustain, defend and strengthen the regime. Investigating this matter in Venezuela is a larger-scale task for at least two reasons. First, because there have been many authoritarian influences that could inspire –sometimes explicitly but operationally with extreme opacity– policies and responses to critical situations for the maintenance of the regime, situations that would require a detailed analysis of the government discourse and its most influential international counterparts at different times²¹. Some examples of this are the insistence on approaches, unconditional openings, and expressions of affinity of policies and orientations with authoritarian regimes near and far, geographically and culturally, as well as the praises of their methods of government and the invitations to advisers. Its study involves analyzing policy formulations but also documenting links to specify what is materialized in agreements, decisions and practices. Second, because critical moments have abounded, each of which merits in-depth studies on the manifestations of identification with the policies or orientations of related individuals, organizations or governments, as well as on their effective adoption.

What has been learned: what and from whom

To observe what has been learned, some critical moments for the Venezuelan government can be explored, and there

20 Cecilia Osorio & José M. Vergara, “La difusión de políticas públicas” ...

21 The repertoires summarized in the previous section as learnings from the Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring have become increasingly familiar to Venezuelans.

search for manifestations of identification with repertoires of resilience used by authoritarian regimes in relation to a set of critical variables, in the transition from hybridity from electoral authoritarianism to hegemonic and closed authoritarianism. Respectable international indexes that have registered this transit in Venezuelan include among their criteria evaluations on the integrity of electoral processes, separation of powers, government performance, guarantee of civil and political liberties, pluralism and participation. The already outlined repertoires against the opposition movements of the Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring, which are quite familiar to Venezuelans, were generators of authoritarian know-how in times in which the international and national conditions favored democratic diffusion. Whether analyzed at a distance from those events or by the links that were developed and maintained with the governments of Russia and Iran²², their influence has become particularly relevant since national and international pressure increased through sanctions,

22 Vladimir Rovinski, "Russian-Venezuelan Relations at a Crossroads" (Woodrow Wilson Center, 2019), available in: https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/russia-venezuela_report_rouvinski_final.pdf; "Russia's Continuing Engagement with Venezuela in 2019 and Beyond - An Update" (Woodrow Wilson Center, 2019), available in: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Russia%E2%80%99s%20Continuing%20Engagement%20with%20Venezuela%20in%202019%20and%20Beyond%20-%20An%20Update.pdf>; John E. Herbst & Jason Marczak, "Russia's Intervention in Venezuela: What's at Stake?" (Atlantic Council Policy Brief, septiembre 2019), available in: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Russia-Venezuela-Policy-Brief.pdf>

Joshua Chang, "A Tale of Two Rogue States: The Iran-Venezuela Partnership" (Georgetown Security Studies Review, julio 2020), available in: <https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2020/07/19/a-tale-of-two-rogue-states-the-iran-venezuela-partnership/>

as it affects the three countries to different degrees and has made them increasingly challenging vis-à-vis the United States.

To draw a general overview of learning, within the limits of what is covered in this analysis, some of the accumulated learning around four critical moments or circumstances for the regime and for the democratic cause of Venezuela can be summarized.

Challenging moments / Learnings, repertoire

From the coup of April 2002 to the recall referendum of 2004

- Appeasement of international and national democratic actors.
- Acceptance of the presence of international facilitators within the framework of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.
- Intensive use of material and institutional resources to evade compliance with the measures agreed upon at the negotiating table and agreements, and defer the socio-political conditions of the constitutional referendum on the revocation of the presidential mandate in their favor.
- Encourage international anti-liberal and anti-imperialist polarization. Approach challenging actors of the *status quo* and support political movements and organizations prone to the dissemination of critical ideas and practices of opposition to the essential institutions of representative democracy and its international protection.

From the definition of a “new strategic map” in 2004 and the defeat of the constitutional reform in 2007 to the referendum on re-election in 2009

- Advances in public control of the media aimed at achieving the so-called “communicational hegemony.”
- Restrictions to the financing of civil society organizations.

- Organization of pro-government demonstrations in parallel to calls for protests.
- Refusal to accept independent international electoral observation missions and human rights evaluation missions.
- Disqualification of the results of the defeated referendum to reform the Constitution. Call, despite constitutional limits, for another consultation to allow indefinite reelection.
- Promotion of alternative international forums, withdrawal of integration agreements, and increased political tension with the United States.
- Changes in the security doctrine, beginning of the purchase of weapons from Russia. First financial agreements with China.

From the opposition unification, its strengthening and mobilization, to the succession of Chávez by Maduro and the escalation of repression and violence against the protests from 2014 to 2017

- Degradation of electoral conditions.
- Factual ignorance of the powers of the National Assembly after losing the ruling majority in the 2015 elections.
- Sequence of disqualifications, arrest, political asylum and exile of opposition deputies.
- Increasing violent repression of citizen protests.
- Political instrumentalization of opportunities for dialogue with the opposition at critical moments (2014-2015; 2016-2017), with the presence of international facilitators considered acceptable by the regime.

- Ignorance and withdrawal of international commitments to protect democracy and human rights.

From national and international democratic pressures and the negotiations of 2017-2018 and 2019

- Maintenance and diversification of the forms of repression and social control.
- Taking advantage of dialogues and negotiations in search of time and pressure reduction and, since mid-2017, the lifting of sanctions.
- Development of geopolitically challenging and legally illegal links and procedures to evade the effects of sanctions. Closer relations with Iran and Turkey.
- Calling and holding elections for a Constituent Assembly in 2017 and for a President in 2018, in breach of constitutional and electoral integrity standards.
- Call for parliamentary elections under conditions imposed by the Supreme Court to favor official control of the National Assembly, including the intervention of the largest political parties.

Policies such as these illustrate the accumulation of learnings in an environment of democratic recession in which, despite the reduction in geopolitical room for maneuver compared to the first decade of the century, Venezuelan authoritarianism has maintained a network of authoritarian linkages and leverages from which it has emulated and adjusted policies such as those outlined above in matters as important as the rule of law and the separation of powers, pluralism, electoral integrity, the party system and civil society, the protection of human rights and freedom of expression.

Within the complexities that should be recalled about determining the sources and modalities, links and incidence that favor autocratization and the preservation of the Venezuelan regime, the sequence of accumulation of learning can be associated with certain relationships in which Chávez's personal affinities were as diverse as they were substantively difficult to document²³, as was the selection of his advisers on economic and strategic matters, or his affinities with the Sao Paulo Forum. Determining what and how much of what was advised was assimilated to the repertoire of the so-called Bolivarian revolution exceeds the purposes of this essay, but it is possible to estimate the sequence of learning, especially linked to relations with Cuba.

From the first moment, without a doubt, there is the strengthening between 2002 and 2004 of the alliance formalized with Cuba in 2000 –significantly important in defining the terms of Chávez's succession and for the orientation of Maduro's management– and the expansion of the terms of cooperation that was advancing and penetrating strategic sectors. The evolution of the closeness between the two regimes has been understood in three phases in which the learnings of the Venezuelan regime were meshed with the Cuban model²⁴.

23 E.g., close and simultaneous relationships were maintained with Norberto Ceresole, even longer with Fidel Castro, with regimes such as those of Gaddafi, Al-Ássad or Robert Mugabe, as well as expressions of sympathy and rapprochement with the leadership of the Colombian guerrilla –at each end of the political spectrum but all undemocratic and encouraging of the totalitarian vocation. All of them speak of the openness to such influences and advice from very early on in the Chávez government project.

24 Periodization is very resourcefully stated for the purpose of identifying learning themes by Bryan Fonseca & John Polga-Hecimovich in "Venezuela and Cuba: The Ties that Bind, I. Two Nations, One Revolution: The Evolution of the Contemporary Cuba-Venezuela Relations" (Wilson

Shortly after Chávez came to power, having visited Cuba before in 1994 and expressed his admiration for the Cuban revolution, which he said should be emulated, and for Fidel Castro himself, who would become a close companion and mentor, there was an agreement on energy cooperation and in other areas that was to reach unprecedented breadth and opacity. In 2002, after the coup that displaced Chávez from power for just over a day, Castro's support and advice encouraged greater rapprochement and cooperation in intelligence, as well as the promotion of a strategy to overcome the political crisis, between the process of negotiations with international facilitation, the development of social programs with advice and Cuban presence, and the measures to delay the holding of the recall referendum of the presidential mandate until 2004. At the end of this year –celebrating a decade of the 1994 meeting– Castro and Chávez signed an even broader cooperation agreement in Havana and founded the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) for those with ideological affinities, which would be complemented the following year by oil agreements, financed for Venezuela, useful to win support and votes without the need for ideological agreement in the Caribbean. Between 2004 and 2013, Cuba's influence and opportunities for learnings and their application increased markedly as the challenge to the United States grew. Progress was being made in the nationalization of the economy, the politicization of the Armed Forces, and the advice and Cuban presence in the areas of intelligence, communications, training and security planning. Despite the succession of Fidel Castro by his brother Raúl, the death of Chávez and the financial limitations of Venezuela since 2013 to maintain the previous levels

Center, 2020). Available in: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Venezuela-Cuba%20FINAL.pdf>

of economic support for Cuba, the arrival of Nicolás Maduro to power did not diminish mutual dependence. It was felt with intensity in Venezuela through the use of violence on scales hitherto unknown to quell 2014 protests, through the concentration of economic activities in military hands, and through the degradation of electoral processes to distort the value of the vote and the right to choose. This was revealed both in the convocation and election of an unconstitutional Constituent Assembly and in the presidential one in May 2018. Internationally, the withdrawal from the OAS, the disqualification and abandonment of bodies of scrutiny and evaluation in human rights, the search for Support for authoritarian powers and tolerance for disrespecting international institutions are, at least, similarities between both foreign policies. However, there is an enormous difference regarding the professional institutional management of Cuban diplomacy and its ability to combine challenge with negotiation.

This alliance was joined from the first years by the approaches to similar regional movements and forums, to authoritarian and defiant international actors of the international liberal order in the Middle East and Africa, always ready to disqualify the institutions and practices of representative democracy and to applaud any initiative that would threaten it –or even the guarantees of human rights– in the name of social justice or political resentment.

In its different phases, relations with Russia, Iran and China –with the important variations derived from their international priorities and strategies– have also been carriers of learnings and resources to materialize them. They have encouraged changes in doctrine, strategies and equipment for public safety and the repression of protests, the use of propaganda and the media under state control, the dissemination and manipulation of information

in networks and through informational agencies, in defiance not only of democratic powers but also of principles, norms and institutions of international law. They have also been important for the strategy of evasion of sanctions and the authoritarian instrumentalization of discussions and proposals in international forums.

There have been other sources of learning, of even more complex study but unavoidable mention, such as those derived from relationships and influences that have been cultivated in the illicit, criminal and subversive, all linked to corruption in its broadest sense: from the breath and participation in the appropriation of public goods and those derived from illicit activities, to the acceptance of those activities and administration of impunities. Not surprisingly, corruption, and not only inefficiency, is characteristic and easily learned and shared between regimes in which the separation of powers disappears.

After this succinct exploration, it is unavoidable to wonder about the quality of autocratic learnings as sources of resilience. That quality refers to both its legitimacy and its efficiency²⁵. Regarding the former, the list of authoritarian learnings and their extreme manifestations have made the Venezuelan regime an anti-model and, in another sense of legitimacy, that of acceptance, it has basically obeyed reasons of political and geopolitical calculation nationally and internationally, so that expediency has displaced convictions. Effectiveness, on the other hand, varies depending on how it is measured. It will be considered effective due to its ability to stay in power during the last two decades, but

25 Thomas Ambrosio, "Authoritarian Norms in a Changing International System", *Politics and Governance* 6, no. 2 (2018): 120-123. Available in: <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/politicsandgovernance/article/view/1474/1474>

ineffective in its balance of accumulated costs and risks, which are projected as vulnerabilities inside and outside the country, and as sources of instability for the regime.

The Venezuelan model is no longer the object of imitation and authoritarian learning –together with the environment, the relationships and influences in the midst of which they have developed. They have not managed to stifle or hide the fact that domestic and international democratic resistance remains. This other face of resilience, even in times of democratic recession, suggests both the permanence of democratic learning and concern about the need for its innovation and diffusion.

3. Finally: the challenges of democratic relearning

If the study of learnings that contribute to the diffusion and resilience of authoritarianisms emerged as a challenge at the beginning of this essay, after its general characterization, it is pertinent to think about what the balance of these learnings means as a challenge to the Venezuelan democratic cause.

It is worth returning to the issue of the effectiveness and legitimacy of autocratic learnings in times in which the Venezuelan regime has become a hindrance in both dimensions, but with the risk that the urgency of effective solutions encourages a transition to some other authoritarian modality and is granted national and international legitimacy²⁶. Thus, the first democratic challenge is to properly diagnose the moment and the government's repertoires, taking into account the risks of moving away from rationality

26 Stephen Krasner "Learning to Live with Despots. The Limits of Democracy Promotion", *Foreign Affairs* (marzo-abril, 2020). Available in: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2020-02-10/learning-live-despots>

to those induced by extreme stress in the midst of a situation as critical as the Venezuelan one²⁷.

In short, the challenges of democratic learning refer not only to a collection of repertoires or a toolbox, but to the orientations towards internal and external relations and institutions. This involves the entire population, but especially the leading elites who hold representation and control, administer, decide and who play a very important role.

In human and humanitarian terms, a fundamental part of the initial challenge of democratic learning is to recover and strengthen the valuation and effectiveness of citizen and institutional, national and international means, for the comprehensive protection of human rights, addressing the extreme precariousness of Venezuelans.

Regarding the need for the national recovery of the rule of law and democracy, the appreciation of Venezuelans for the right to vote, which the polls continue to show, is fertile ground for the evaluation of their defense and demand for the necessary reinstitutionalization. Respect for the electoral moment, so depreciated by authoritarianism, is an essential part of what must continue to be valued and defended, starting with the real possibility of alternation. Surveillance over the exercise of government, which must be subject to institutional checks and balances, with full guarantee of political rights, has opened up space even amid strong regulations and measures of intimidation and repression, but must be converted into citizen awareness of

27 Kurt Weyland has contributed to the study of learnings in “counter-diffusion” processes, warning against the limitations of rationality: *Revolution and Reaction. The diffusion of Authoritarianism in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

institutionalized demand for accountability. To the traditional democratic learning of a national order, even more international efforts should be added such as measures of scrutiny, evaluation, recommendations, solidarity and follow-up in matters that are part of the international protection of democracy, including transparency and comprehensive observation of electoral processes.

If the valuation and effective practice of pluralism are important in dealing with a complex national agenda, autocratically fed with temptations to polarize and fragment, something similar is happening internationally. Democratic learning advises, for reasons of legitimacy and efficiency, to avoid becoming part of polarization exercises and to stick to assessing links and incidence in harmony with the orientations and aspirations, needs and interests of Venezuelan society. To this end, it is important to recover the valuation of principles, norms and practices of international law that regulate relations between States and support the establishment of spaces for coordination and cooperation that help balance and set limits to power relations.

Despite the twenty years that have passed in the midst of the increasingly harsh authoritarian imposition, not only are there persistent signs of democratic tendencies, but new learnings have been incorporated, and foreign encouragement urges those pillars to be sustained and strengthened in an extremely complex circumstance, with obstacles and demands. Knowing this is not enough to achieve the desired end: it is necessary to innovate by learning from the democratization experiences of other countries, but recognizing the political specificities of the case, the seriousness of its social drama and the risks of authoritarian geopolitization to which it is exposed. All of this is forcing, but

also encouraging, to strengthen convictions, to diagnose needs and to update democratic repertoires.

Social cohesion and democratic transformation

Rogelio Pérez Perdomo¹

This is a modest contribution to the dialogue on transition to democracy/democratic transformation. What I gather from two excellent articles by Juan Miguel Matheus² and Paola Bautista de Alemán³ is that political change in Venezuela requires greater depth than a transition towards democracy. This deeper change, which includes social and cultural aspects as well as political, is what they call democratic transformation. The transition is limited to political change. It is not a mere terminological change or a whim: they support it through an extensive bibliography of studies on political change.

Unfortunately, this is a theoretical dialogue. Currently, in Venezuela, political change is not on the table. The government of Maduro has entrenched itself with reforms that make change through electoral and peaceful means practically impossible, and the opposition seems to lack the strength to force change. But the government is less strong than it seems. Its weakness lies in the

1 I thank Elsa Cardozo and Victoria Capriles for their comments and corrections to the first draft of this paper.

2 Juan Miguel Matheus, "Justicia transformadora para Venezuela", *Democratización* 3 (2020).

3 Paola Bautista de Alemán, "Transformation for Venezuela: Gangster State and democratization", *Democratization*, no. 7 (2020).

impossibility of changing the policies that have led the country to its ruin. These are policies that have increasingly paralyzed the productive apparatus, as shown by the fall in oil production and the acute shortage of gasoline. Not only the supply of gasoline is in difficulties: water and electricity distributed to the population are also scarce. All this despite the abundance of oil in the subsoil and water in rivers and dams. The installed capacity to produce electricity is also much greater than what is actually produced and distributed. The government has monopolized these activities and many others, and simply does not know how to manage them. Food has been handled differently: high prices for those who can pay and boxes with basic products for those who have a *carnet de la patria* ("national card"). The situation has produced a massive emigration, only stopped by the pandemic that affects the entire world.

The condemnation of the main countries of America and Europe, which has included sanctions against high-ranking personalities and state companies, has isolated the country and has led Maduro to seek allies among authoritarian regimes. They express their solidarity, but do not have the ability or the will to make investments that can reverse the economic decline. In short, the situation is unstable and at the time this is being written there is an unexpected opening of the Maduro government to a negotiation for having freed a hundred political prisoners, but it would be risky to predict that we are on the way to democratization.

One of the rules Matheus refers to is not to jump ahead in detailing the specific measures of transformative justice in the processes of political change, as this can be counterproductive. This is an easily understandable prudential rule, but it has resulted in the dialogue being kept at a considerably theoretical

and abstract level. This article will not break the rule, but it wants to bring the reflection down to earth, to Venezuelan society, and to contribute with a bibliography that relates law to the social sciences.

The first section refers to the issue of how cohesive Venezuelan society is and the state's role. The second section will analyze what the base is and what this transformation requires.

Social cohesion and anomie

Roberto Briceño-León and I have had an extensive dialogue on violence, anomie and social cohesion in Venezuela since a long time ago⁴. *Espacio Abierto - Cuadernos Venezolanos de Sociología* will soon publish our recent works regarding this dialogue. They are summarized in this article as they are relevant to the issue of the expected transformation in Venezuela.

Social cohesion refers to the ties that unite a society, to the cement that allows it to be held together and that allows people to live together in harmony⁵. It implies a certain consensus on the normative⁶. The opposing situation is anomie, which is basically confusion about what is normative or weakening it. Different authors have highlighted different aspects of the phenomenon,

4 Roberto Briceño-León & Rogelio Pérez Perdomo, eds, *Morir en Caracas. Violencia y ciudadanía en Venezuela* (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 2002).

5 Roberto Briceño-León & Alberto Camardiel, "El impacto de la violencia en la cohesión social", in *Los nuevos rostros de la violencia. Empobrecimiento y letalidad policial*, eds. Roberto Briceño-León, Alberto Camardiel & Gloria Perdomo (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2019): 43-44.

6 Roberto Briceño-León & Alberto Camardiel, "El impacto de la violencia...": 42.

making the subject one of the most debated in sociology⁷. Let us take the definitions offered as antithetical and instrumental for this work.

Both social cohesion and anomie are theoretical constructions, models. Normally there are no perfectly cohesive or totally anomic societies. We can conceive them as the extremes of a continuum, and the task is to locate a specific society on that continuum. Briceño-León & Camardiel⁸ propose a measurement based on a questionnaire in which the interviewees had to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a set of sentences:

- Today we respect each other more than a year ago in Venezuela.
- Today the coexistence among Venezuelans is more harmonious than a year ago.
- Today the law is respected more than a year ago in Venezuela.
- Today Venezuelans are more equal before the law than a year ago.
- Today Venezuela is a safer country than a year ago.
- Today Venezuela is a fairer country than a year ago.
- Today we are happier than a year ago in Venezuela.

The questions referring to the law are aimed at measuring the normativity or the effective regulation capacity of society using

7 Nikos Passas, "Theorizing in the anomie tradition: Durkheim, Merton and beyond", in *Anomia: normas, expectativas y legitimación social*, ed. Tosca Hernández (Oñati: International Institute for the Sociology of Law, 1993)

8 Roberto Briceño-León & Alberto Camardiel, "El impacto de la violencia en la cohesión social", in *Los nuevos rostros de la violencia. Empobrecimiento y letalidad policial*, eds. Roberto Briceño-León, Alberto Camardiel & Gloria Perdomo (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2019).

the law. The first two measure respect and coexistence. The last three, well-being. The questionnaire or survey was passed to a sample of more than 6,000 subjects as part of the 2016 ENCOVI study, a considerably large sample in opinion studies. It should be noted that it does not attempt an absolute measure on coexistence, respect for the law or equality, but a comparison with the previous year. This type of measurement is frequent in sociology. Also, ‘a year ago’ should not be understood 365 days but as the relatively recent past. Results are shown in the table below.

Table 1

Percentages according to seven items of social cohesion	Agreement	Disagreement
Today we respect each other more	9	91
Id. Coexistence is more harmonious	10	90
Id. The law is more respected	10	90
Id. We are more equal in the law	11	89
Id. The country is safer	6	94
Id. The country is fairer	9	91
Id. We are happier	7	93
Average	9	91

SOURCE: Briceño-León & Camardiel⁹, data from the ENCOVI 2016 survey (National Survey of Living Conditions. UCAB)

It is important to consider this isolated study more broadly. Briceño-León directs the Laboratory of Social Sciences and the Venezuelan Observatory of Violence and, in the company of a

9 Roberto Briceño-León & Alberto Camardiel, “El impacto de la violencia en la cohesión social”, in *Los nuevos rostros de la violencia. Empobrecimiento y letalidad policial*, eds. Roberto Briceño-León, Alberto Camardiel & Gloria Perdomo (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2019): 49.

group of researchers, has produced important studies on violence, organized crime and institutions in Venezuela¹⁰. These studies show the deterioration of the Venezuelan institutional system. The opinion study shows the seriousness of the situation in the general perception: 9 out of 10 Venezuelans think that we are worse off than in the immediate past.

However, this measure does not tell us how far or close we are to anomie. That extreme can be figured in the state of nature as described by Hobbes. Of course, this is an intellectual construct, but Hobbes points out that he had had in mind the English society of his time, burdened by civil war and severe political and religious conflicts. It also refers to the relations between European nations in his time, when war was frequent. Venezuela is not there.

Due to professional deformation, I pay attention to the law and the state. Four of the seven statements that were submitted to the population have to do with the law, and my proposal is to look at this area more ethnographically from a specific case: the Tower of David¹¹. It is an imposing office building in the central area of Caracas (La Candelaria) that was taken over by the state as a result of the 1994 banking crisis. As a result of severe

10 Roberto Briceño-León, Olga Ávila & Alberto Camardiel, eds, *Violencia e institucionalidad* (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2012).

Roberto Briceño-León & Alberto Camardiel, eds, *Delito organizado, mercados ilegales y democracia en Venezuela* (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2015).

Roberto Briceño-León, ed., *Ciudades de vida y muerte. La ciudad y el pacto social para la contención de la violencia* (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2016).

Roberto Briceño-León & Alberto Camardiel, "El impacto de la violencia en la cohesión social", in *Los nuevos rostros de la violencia. Empobrecimiento y letalidad policial*, eds. Roberto Briceño-León, Alberto Camardiel & Gloria Perdomo (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2019).

11 Manuel Gómez, "The Tower of David: Social order in a vertical community," *FIU Law Review* 10 (2014-2015).

floods that left many people homeless, President Hugo Chávez invited vacant properties to be invaded. That is how the tower was invaded in 2007. More than a thousand people occupied the building, formed a cooperative, refurbished the unfinished building as best they could. Not only houses arose: also supplies, a nursery school, a hairdresser, an ice cream factory, a bakery, a gym and a variety of shops. Some posters established the rules of coexistence, prohibited activities, and the way to dispose of garbage. There were people who watched over the rules and there were motorcycle taxi drivers to take people who requested it up the ramps. The occupants enlisted the help of architects who described in a remarkable book the transformation of a semi-built tower into a living space¹². There was also an increase in thefts in the area of La Candelaria, attributed by the press and neighbors to the invaders. In the media, the invaded Tower of David was considered a den of outlaws. Living there carried the stigma of criminal living. In 2012, following the kidnapping of a Costa Rican diplomat, the police suspected that the kidnappers and the kidnapped would be in the Tower of David. A huge operation was organized, but neither the kidnapped nor any evidence of criminal activity was found. The police used the situation to take valuable belongings, and residents then protested to the Ministry of the Interior¹³. The kidnappers and the kidnapped were located elsewhere in the country.

12 Alfredo Brillembourg & Hubert Klumpner, *Torre David. Informal vertical communities* (Zürich: Lars Müller Publisher, 2013). The project won the Golden Lion in the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2012. Alfredo Brillembourg, one of the authors, is a Venezuelan-American architect who has taught in universities in Caracas as well as in Columbia and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich.

13 Manuel Gómez, "The Tower of David: Social order in a vertical community," *FIU Law Review* 10 (2014-2015).

The Tower of David case shows that the main violators of the rules were the head of state who incited the invasion of property and the policemen who robbed the occupiers. The squatters themselves were needy people who saw in the invasion an opportunity to solve the serious personal problem of homelessness or a business opportunity, but who quickly generated a social order with rules that remind those of us who have studied law of the Twelve Roman Tables. This situation is not exceptional in Venezuela. The neighborhoods of Venezuelan cities have been formed by invasion and by buildings outside the urban regulations, but they have counted on the complicity, or at least the indifference, of those who are in charge of protecting property and enforcing urban regulations. They usually generate their own rules of coexistence¹⁴. The Tower of David case is striking because the invasion responded to an incitement from the Head of State, something that was a new because neither the heads of state nor the ministers had done it in the past. On the other hand, the police taking advantage of a home visit to seize citizens' property is not news. In other words, the state is not a source of social cohesion, it does not support the normative, but rather devours it. Cohesion arises from society itself.

14 Rogelio Pérez Perdomo & Pedro Nikken, *Derecho y propiedad de la vivienda en los barrios de Caracas* (Caracas: FCE & Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1979).

Rogelio Pérez Perdomo & Teolinda Bolívar "Legal pluralism in Caracas", in *Illegal cities*, Edesio Fernandes & Anne Varley, eds. (London: Zed Books, 1998).

Roberto Briceño-León, "The contribution of informal institutionality to safe cities in Venezuela", in *Reducing urban violence in the Global South. Towards safe and inclusive cities*, eds. Jennifer Salahub, Markus Gottbacher, John de Boer and Mayssam Zaaroura (London: Routledge, 2019).

Teolinda Bolívar & Josefina Baldó, comps, *La cuestión de los barrios* (Caracas: Monte Ávila, Fundación Polar & Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1996).

Tolerated invasions are not only common in Venezuela; it is practically the rule in Latin America¹⁵. Everywhere, the invaders generate an order, a kind of parallel law. In the sociology of law there is talk of legal pluralism and informal legal systems. Briceño León¹⁶ prefers the term “informal institutionality” and describes numerous arrangements of this type in Caracas. The emergence of informal systems or order without the law is not exclusive to Latin America either. Ellickson¹⁷ analyzes this situation in Northern California. This leads to the analysis of the role of the state in democratic transformation and the place of law and informal institutions.

Democratic transformation, informal institutions and the rule of law

The work of Méndez, O'Donnell & Pinheiro¹⁸ has drawn attention to the incompleteness of the transition to democracy in Latin America. Most countries escaped dictatorships in the 1980s and 1990s. The new governments were democratically elected,

15 Antonio Azuela de la Cueva, *La ciudad, la propiedad privada y el derecho* (México: El Colegio de México, 1989).

Antonio Azuela de la Cueva, “Los asentamientos populares y el orden jurídico en la urbanización periférica en América Latina,” *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 55 (1993).

Hernando de Soto, *El otro sendero* (Bogotá: Editorial Oveja Negra, 1987).

16 Roberto Briceño-León, “The contribution of informal institutionality to safe cities in Venezuela”, in *Reducing urban violence in the Global South. Towards safe and inclusive cities*, eds. Jennifer Salahub, Markus Gottbacher, John de Boer and Mayssam Zaaroura (London: Routledge, 2019).

17 Robert Ellickson, *Order without law. How neighbors settle disputes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

18 Juan Méndez, Guillermo O'Donnell, Paulo Pinheiro, eds., *The (un)rule of law & the underprivileged in Latin America* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).

but for most citizens the situation did not change much. Their civil rights continued to be disrespected. The police continued to abuse the most vulnerable ('underprivileged'). The situation is not unknown in countries with consolidated democracies, such as the United States and European countries. The Black Lives Matters movement has exposed police abuses against people of African descent in the United States and other countries. Another example is abuses against temporary migrant workers in Germany. These examples show severe moles in countries that we consider stable democracies and well-established rule of law. This raises the contemporary conception of democracy.

A classic on democracy like Tocqueville's¹⁹ makes us smile today. The America that Tocqueville visited was not democratic for our patrons. Only a limited number of men had the right to vote. Women and people of African origin (mostly slaves) were excluded. Women and slaves not only could not vote, but were subjected to abusive behavior by their masters. The search for protection or correction was very limited. This is what the lack of civil rights means. However, the United States looked like a democracy compared to Europe where power was concentrated in a hereditary monarchy and aristocracy, that is, in a small number of people born to run society. Today we believe that democracy requires respect for the political and civil rights of all and that the power of those who exercise it is limited by law²⁰. That is why democracy today is associated with the rule of law, respect for human rights and a significant degree of economic freedom, although countries –even the so-called democratic ones– do not fully correspond to the model of democracy and the rule of law.

19 Alexis de Tocqueville, (1835-1840): *La démocratie en Amérique*, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1990).

20 Robert Dahl, *On democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

Matheus²¹ and Bautista de Alemán²² advocate a transformation of the Venezuelan political system. The transition to a new regime does not seem to be enough. The Venezuelan state has decayed to such a degree and has been so captured by criminal networks that a change in government and a transitional justice approach is not enough. This study agrees with these approaches, but wants to go a little further on the issue of what needs to change. A study by Valdés-Hernández²³ raises the extreme. If totalitarian regimes produce anthropological damage, the transformation approach must be very radical. It should go to the mindset or culture of every citizen or most of them. Would Venezuela be in that situation?

I do not know of studies on the effects of the Chavista revolution on the culture and personality of Venezuelans. Vargas-Arenas & Sanoja Obediente²⁴, two distinguished anthropologists linked to Chavismo, have a rather programmatic work that insists on the necessary changes in the vision of history for the transformation of culture. Apparently, the transformation that they were proposing had not yet taken place in 2013 and it is doubtful that much progress has been made since then, although efforts have not been lacking. Quintero²⁵ analyzes the changes in the field of history by reviewing school manuals. Although

21 Juan Miguel Matheus, "Justicia transformadora para Venezuela", *Democratización* 3 (2020).

22 Paola Bautista de Alemán, "Transformation for Venezuela: Gangster State and democratization", *Democratization*, no. 7 (2020).

23 Dagoberto Valdés-Hernández, "Cause, symptoms and consequences of anthropological damage produced by totalitarian regimes", *Democratization* 7 (2020).

24 Iraida Vargas-Arenas & María Sanoja Obediente, *Historia, identidad y poder* (Caracas: Editorial Galac, 2013).

25 Inés Quintero, "Enseñar historia en Venezuela. Tensiones y conflictos", *Caravelle, Cahiers du Monde Hispanique et Luso-Brésilien* 104 (2015).

Inés Quintero, "Uso político de la historia en la Venezuela de Chávez y Maduro", *Estudios Públicos* 152 (2018).

there have indeed been changes, these have not been substantial. The new history has continued to deepen the cult of Bolívar and other national heroes, with some changes in which heroes now stand out. Among these are Ezequiel Zamora and Hugo Chávez, while other heroes have fallen from grace. There has also been a degradation in the quality of the texts. Ellner²⁶ analyzed the cultural and educational aspects of the revolution. He found that it was focused on education, ideology, the transformation of values and skills for work, but that internal conflicts and institutional weakness did not allow it to go very far regarding its purposes.

It can be argued that the express policies of changing the culture and the vision of history have not been successful, but that the revolution may have achieved transformations not necessarily sought. I am not aware of studies on the subject, but the hypothesis can be formulated that the enormous failure in solving social problems and in managing the economy may have discredited certain types of policies associated with the regime. It can be conjectured that the first to reject the nationalization or expropriation of a company would be its own workers, or that announcements of a minimum wage increase or price regulation would be viewed with extreme distrust by the population as a whole. Socialist rhetoric may have much less traction today than it did in the 1990s. Government policies may be questioned as socialist. Thus, the government did not make significant investments in public transportation when it could, and at the same time kept the price of gasoline very low for a long time, which encouraged private means of transportation. This policy is the antipodes of socialism. What is undeniable is that the orientation has been anti-business due to the abundance of confiscations and

26 Steve Ellner, "Venezuela's social-based democratic model, innovations and limitations," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 43 (2011).

expropriations of companies and properties. A socialist rhetoric has also been used. The hypothesis is that in a poll or in a free election, not just the government, but also socialism would have very limited support.

Another feared effect is that the direct subsidy policy may have made Venezuelans more dependent on the state. The recent covid-19 pandemic and the quarantine measures that led to the closure of companies ordered by the state has shown rather the opposite: the entrepreneurial nature of Venezuelans, at least in my area, Northeast Caracas. My cell phone was damaged and the premises of the company that sold it to me and repairs it was closed in compliance with the regulations, but in a small neighboring kiosk there were people who offered to repair it. The mechanic shops had to close, but if you needed their services, you just need to make a call and the mechanic would take it to the closed shop and return it fixed some time later. People willing to help park your cars and take care of them while you make a purchase proliferate. People clearly did not stay home waiting for state assistance.

The failure of the revolution to produce a reasonably prosperous economy and a more cohesive society should not be seen as an excuse for not working on a democratic transformation. The triumph of Chávez and his proposal to radically change the political system, including absurdities such as frying the heads of the corrupt in oil, was due to deep dissatisfaction with party democracy. These were instruments for patronage without a real commitment to respect citizens being appreciated. The police were abusive, torture or ill-treatment were a common instrument, the poor were completely unprotected before a machinery of

justice that treated them with negligence and cruelty²⁷. There was an electoral democracy, but the rule of law was very weak and the rights of citizens, especially the most vulnerable, were not respected²⁸. This affected the quality of the political system. There was really no reason for the majority of the population to feel loyalty to a political system that treated it despotically.

The situation is now much more dramatic than in the 1990s. The judges are now even less independent and the abuses against the population much greater. Perhaps the most explicit and egregious are the People's Liberation Operations (OLPs) also called Humanist People's Liberation Operations (OLHPs). They are in charge of a special police force, the FAES, which searches for those identified as criminals in their homes and kills them. They are death squads and they are extrajudicial executions. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has requested its dissolution, but this does not appear to be in the government's plans. Of course, the Public Ministry and the judges must turn a blind eye, and seem to be barely authorized to investigate when someone of some importance within Chavismo falls victim to these humanist operations.

The state, and especially the entire apparatus of repression, needs to be renewed and reeducated. It is difficult to see how current prosecutors and judges can be counted on for a justice that is in charge of punishing the worst human rights violations.

27 Rogelio Pérez Perdomo, coord., *Justicia y pobreza en Venezuela* (Caracas: Monte Ávila, 1987).

28 Rogelio Pérez Perdomo, "Venezuela 1958-1999. The legal system of an impaired democracy", in *Legal cultures in the age of globalization. Latin Europe and Latin America*, eds. Lawrence Friedman & Rogelio Pérez Perdomo (Stanford University Press, 2003).

Matheus's²⁹ work is relevant as it focuses on this area of transformation. I also agree that this is not the time to design in detail what transformative justice can look like.

The importance of state transformation should not make us forget the importance of society and of its action. A conceptual clarification must be done. The rule of law cannot mean submission to state law, whatever it may be. Informal institutionalism or legal pluralism must be considered as part of the rule of law. It is important to allow and encourage society itself to generate its rules. In previous articles, I have analyzed how lawyers in Venezuela have transformed their occupation. Transactional law has flourished and lawyers write contracts that they know will never be brought to court not only because they run counter to formal regulations but because going to court is submitting to corrupt and unpredictable instances. The costs and hassles are incalculable. Contracts solemnize promises and in case of conflict the lawyers themselves become mediators³⁰. This is anomalous in the positivist view of law that associates law with the state, but it is of enormous interest to understand that law can be independent of the state. This is how 'rule of law' should not be understood as the submission of the population to state law, in short, to the state itself. The creation of law by society itself should not be seen as anomalous, but as normal in law. The constitution and the law should not be thought of as instruments of the state, but as a guarantee of the freedom of the people and a search for social cohesion. Of course, the state has an important

29 Juan Miguel Matheus, "Justicia transformadora para Venezuela", *Democratización* 3 (2020).

30 Rogelio Pérez Perdomo, "Anomia, cohesión social y derecho en tiempos de catástrofe", publication admitted to *Espacio Abierto, Cuaderno Venezolano de Sociología* (2020).

role that unfortunately it does not always fulfill and frequently misrepresents.

This outlook can have an impact on the conception of transformative justice. This should not be seen only from the action of state agencies but as a process in which the action of citizens, that is, of the victims and supporting organizations, play an important role. Of course, the state party must contribute its resources, but we should not expect everything to come from the state.

The other aspect is action on society and, especially, on educational matter. Civic education is important and has been neglected for the past four decades. In the past, there was a course called 'Moral and Civic Education' in high school that was replaced in the 1980s by pre-military and military education. In a project started at the Universidad Metropolitana around 2004, an exploratory study of the civic culture of students who were finishing high school in a municipality of Caracas was carried out in both public and private institutions. They were students very close to having the right to vote or they already had that right. The result showed ignorance and evaluations that caught our attention. They were simple questions in the form of bullets. An example of a question: "The police know that a man raped a woman. Is it appropriate for him to torture him to make him confess?" The answer should be a simple yes or no. A high percentage answered affirmatively, ignoring that torture is a serious crime in Venezuela and internationally and that, according to the law, confession before the police or obtained by torture is worthless. In defense of the young people, it should be pointed out that we all know that the police torture and that probably no one has told them that this is contrary to national and international law. The confusion

regarding the extent of the power of the President of the Republic was quite general, but this did not surprise us given the country's political practice. In pre-military and military education nothing is learned from this. Unfortunately the investigation could not explore beyond its preliminary stage.

I agree with Vargas-Arenas & Sanoja Obediente³¹ that history education is important in the creation of identity and values, but surely I differ from their proposals. In particular, I believe that the cult of heroes, especially military heroes, has been overstated in Venezuela. The history of Venezuela cannot be a list of battles and rebellions. They fought for political projects, for images of the nation. These projects and images are more important. Bolívar was a centralist; Zamora, a federalist. Chavista history hides this crucial difference. What was at stake? The struggle for independence is Manicheanly presented as a struggle between good and evil. It is not presented as a conflict mainly between Venezuelans in which arguments were discussed. A story that presents the ideological and political conflicts of the past would help us to understand it better and also to understand the conflicts that we live in the present. In my opinion, this is a more interesting discussion than the long list of battles with which our children and young people are overwhelmed and the construction of altars to put heroes who are simplified and taken out of their historical context.

Let us respect the recommendations echoed in Matheus's article³² and avoid details. But this is a conversation that should be continued.

31 Iraida Vargas-Arenas & María Sanoja Obediente, *Historia, identidad y poder* (Caracas: Editorial Galac, 2013).

32 Juan Miguel Matheus, "Justicia transformadora para Venezuela", *Democratización* 3 (2020).

Populism and the media: in the “friend” - “enemy” logic

Alejandro Motta Nicolichia

What is populism?

The lack of a concept or an idea that achieves a certain consensus among academics regarding the meaning of populism seems recurring within the bibliography that studies this phenomenon. Populism is a multidimensional concept with the capacity to adapt. In most cases, that understanding is replaced by descriptions of a varied reality¹.

According to Kazin² populism is a controversial and ambiguous concept. For Vallespín and Bascuñán (2017)³, it is a tricky concept that must be accepted taking into consideration its contradictions and ambiguities. For Taggart (2000)⁴, it is an embarrassing and elusive concept that oscillates between great meaning and fundamental conceptual variety.

1 Ernesto Laclau, *La razón populista* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005).

2 Michael Kazin, “Trump and American Populism,” *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 6 (2016): 17–24.

3 Fernando Vallespín and Máriam M. Bascuñán, *Populismos* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2017).

4 Paul Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000).

Part of the problem has to do with its multifaceted nature. In this sense, a first intellectual strategy would be not to try to go beyond the multiplicity itself, that is, to stay within it, analyze the range of empirical cases that it addresses, and draw the conclusions that are possible from a limited and descriptive comparison between them (Laclau, 2005)⁵. The reason rests and is argued in the search for discursive features, political strategies and an approach to social, economic and even cultural problems shared by these actors.

According to Zanatta (2014: 9)⁶, "Its diversity and continuous evolution give it a unique and unrepeatable character". In the words of Barraycoa: "it is like angels: each constitutes a species in itself" (Barraycoa, 2017: 139)⁷. Nelly Arenas (2007)⁸ provides a standpoint that goes beyond conceiving populism as a political strategy. The Venezuelan professor places populism within the social sciences as a category of analysis. However, she recognizes that the conceptual differences that are built around the term by different authors are significant. Therefore, its characteristics cannot be considered as tacit, immovable elements, but rather have an evolutionary character that is redefined thanks to experience, the appearance of new social phenomena, and, therefore, the adaptation of those elements and populist actors to the times.

5 Fernando Vallespín and Máriam M. Bascuñán, *Populismos* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2017).

6 Loris Zanatta, *El populismo* (Madrid: Katz, 2014).

7 Javier Barraycoa, "El populismo en la Europa contemporánea," in *Pueblo y populismo: los desafíos políticos contemporáneos* (2017): 135-156.

8 Nelly Arenas, "El populismo de Hugo Chávez: ¿revirtiendo la democracia venezolana? (2004-2007)," *Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política y Humanidades* 22 (2007): 152-186.

However, the fact that there are common features between different populist actors does not imply the discovery of a concept or replicas with respect to populist phenomena.

Populism legitimizes itself on a number of characteristics rather than on a theoretical basis. Isaiah Berlin, cited by Zanatta (2014)⁹, defines the core of populism in six fundamental parts. The first is related to an idea of community, it is a community experience. The second refers to populism as an apolitical –and even antipolitical– element given that, to its supporters, social order will seem the best policy, even under an authoritarian regime. The third relates to the idea that populism gives centrality and stripped sovereignty back to the people. The fourth is related to the populist wishes to revive values of the past that could be of harmony and social equality in the collective imagination. The fifth refers to the fact that populism always wants to address the majority, and sometimes the whole. Lastly, the sixth understands that the populist phenomenon emerges in societies with a convulsed state.

Populism and authoritarianism

The relationship between authoritarianism and populism is perhaps one of the most obvious and consecutive realities in Latin America. It is not so clearly perceived in Europe and the United States. The word should be differentiated from political action. In other words, it is one thing to transgress the norm and even legalize the autocracy, and another thing is to maintain the functioning of democratic institutions, but to construct a message that would ultimately be undermining fundamental values of democracy.

9 Loris Zanatta, *El populismo* (Madrid: Katz, 2014).

For some scholars, populist principles and democracy are incompatible (Lassalle, Zanatta, Waisborg, Retamozo, De la Torre)¹⁰. Populism, according to this vision, recognizes the authoritarian appropriation of the popular will by a self-proclaimed leader (beyond being elected) who is seen by his followers as the condensation of demands for rupture and promises of redemption. Furthermore, populists are anti-democratic because they construct their rivals as enemies. They must be silenced because their opinions are not part of the debate where the interests and needs of the people are discussed.

The authoritarian and caudillista discourse tries to polarize society, divide, confront. Inevitably that contradicts fundamental democratic values. The populist discourse stimulates the social division into two blocks, dichotomizes the public space and simplifies reality. And thus, one pole cannot dialogue with the other simply because the meeting ground has disappeared.

At times, frontal discourse with authoritarian features maintains a certain degree of legitimacy since it is built on denunciations of real problems in the functioning of democracy. For example, corruption in governments or bureaucracy that does not diligently solve people's daily problems, among others. The populist offer gains credibility and acceptance because it is built in part on that reality, as well as on truths anchored in public opinion and many times verifiable by citizens.

10 José María Lassalle, *Contra el populismo* (Barcelona: Debate, 2017); Loris Zanatta, *El populismo* (Madrid: Katz, 2014); Silvio Waisborg, *Vox populista* (Madrid: Gedisa, 2014); Martín Retamozo, "Populismo en América Latina: Desde la teoría hacia el análisis político. Discurso, sujeto e inclusión en el caso Argentino", *Colombia Internacional* 82 (2014): 221-258. <https://doi.org/10.7440/colombiaint82.2014.09>; Carlos De la Torre, "Populismo y democracia," *Cuadernos Del CENDES* 27, no. 73 (2010): 171-184.

Populist hyper-leadership might be right in the denunciation, but it is so rarely in the remedy to these obvious troubles. Thus, the political discussion identifies the relationship between populism and simple promises or quick solutions, which are mostly inapplicable.

Populist legitimacy has another characteristic, which is common today. Most fall into the contradiction of assuming the rules of liberal democracy when it is precisely what they constantly criticize.

Democratic fragility in Latin America was clear at the beginning of the 20th century (Jaime Guzmán Foundation, 2016)¹¹. Left-wing populisms conquered power through elections: Hugo Chávez in 1998, Evo Morales in 2005 and Rafael Correa in 2007. However, these elected leaders ended up implementing a “plebiscitary dictatorship”. The participation of the people was ensured through direct democracy (Weyland, 2001)¹². In the end, that popular power ended up being a delegation to an authoritarian politician who took advantage of the participation mechanisms to get the people to approve his mandates. In part, they did so thanks to the excessive use of the mass media, which allowed them to strengthen their image and at the same time represent authority and order, even symbolizing the popular will. (Patiño Aristizábal, 2007)¹³.

11 Jaime Guzmán Foundation, “Corrupción y fragilidad institucional en América Latina”, *Ideas & Propuestas* 213 (2016): 1-16.

12 Kurt Weyland, “Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics”, *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 1 (2001): 1-22.

13 Luis Guillermo Patiño, “Neopopulismo y comunicación en el contexto de las democracias latinoamericanas”, *Comunicación y pluralismo* 4 (2007): 89-104.

The anti-establishment discourse

Authoritarianism is also a symptom of the legitimized discourse of the populist who reveals, explains and develops a discourse against the established system; usually worn out and with little credibility. Thus, a fundamental aspect of the dichotomy in the populist message is the confrontation against the established power. This established power can be represented by several agents: the Empire, traditional political parties, the monarchy, businessmen, private banks, the European Union, the politicians themselves, traditional institutions and also the traditional media. Said agents vary according to experience, the political history of each country or region, the socio-political context, and, of course, the populist character and phenotype that emerges in the midst of the crisis.

Populists reject these agents considered as part of "the establishment", the "political caste", the power as a rising group for not representing the "people", and for endangering their interests (De Cleen, 2017)¹⁴. In this sense, it is determined which agents belong to the establishment, and what populist actors mean by the so-called establishment. In his concept of populism collected by Máximo Leibman (2009: 4)¹⁵ Gino Germani ensures that "common people confront privileged interest groups, generally considered contrary to the people and the nation".

The populist leader or actor must quickly assume a position with respect to the different agents. Next, they must define and argue their belonging to the group identified with the "people",

14 Benjamin De Cleen, *Populism and nationalism* (Oxford University, 2017): 1-29.

15 Máximo Leibman, *La fragmentación política argentina: presidentes y antonimias* (Buenos Aires, 2010).

that is, with the “good people”. As De Cleen (2017) clarifies¹⁶, populists speak for “the common people”, “the common man”, “the man in the street”, “those from below”.

The owners of the media, journalists, and large media corporations end up being singled out as part of the anti-people; as a “caste” that looks out only for its interests, beyond the collective, as agents at the service of the bourgeoisie, of the ruling classes.

Populism and the media: allies and enemies

Citizens know and understand political processes through the media. Society is largely mediated and develops its life in the post-industrial stage. “The mass production and dissemination of cultural goods occupy the central place that material goods had previously occupied in industrial society. Metallurgy, the textile industry, the chemical industry as well as the electronic industries were in industrial society what the production and dissemination of knowledge and information are in programmed society, that is, education, health and mass media” (Touraine, 2000: 254)¹⁷.

Based on this postulate and the aforementioned symbiotic relationship between media and politics, it is worth delving into a fundamental aspect of populist discourse, which has to do with a dichotomy in discourse: antagonism from a verbal perspective. A verbal and image construction that separates “friends” from “enemies” by placing said actors (“people” vs “establishment”,

16 Benjamin De Cleen, *Populism and nationalism* (Oxford University, 2017): 1-29.

17 Alain Touraine, A. *Crítica a la modernidad* (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2000).

those from the "inside" vs those from the "outside") in totally irreconcilable positions (Arroyas & Fernández, 2019)¹⁸.

The media are witnesses (they offer their platforms) and actors (they are identified as enemies) of this dilemma, of this process of confrontation. In this sense, populism is aware of its dependence on the media. First, it recognizes its power to influence citizens, whether for change or for the reaffirmation of ideals or convictions. Both Trump, Farage, Tsipras, Iglesias, Marine Le Pen, Hanson in Australia and Chávez are experts in the use of the media (Block & Negrine, 2017)¹⁹.

The hyperconnectivity, the excess of information, the oversizing in social networks about the real and the hypervocalization of citizens, generates an important media awareness from populism. Chávez himself (Bikel, 2008)²⁰, upon his release from prison in 1994, stated: "The media have a fundamental priority for us because they are a weapon for the ideological struggle and a weapon to tell the people about all the expectations we have".

18 Enrique Arroyas Langa and Victoria Fernández Ilundain, "The politics of authenticity in populist discourse: rhetorical analysis of a parliamentary speech by Podemos" in *Populist Discourse. Critical Approaches to Contemporary Politics*, ed. Encarnación Hidalgo-Tenorio (Londres: Routledge, 2019), 17-32.

19 Elena Block and Ralph Negrine, "The Populist Communication Style: Toward a Critical Framework," *International Journal of Communication* 11 (2017): 178-197.

20 Ofra Bikel, The Hugo Chávez Show [Television series episode]. In Fanning, D. (Executive Producer), PBS Frontline. T27, Ep 4. Estados Unidos: WGBH-TV (2008). Retrived from: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/hugochavez/>

The media as enemies of the people

The populist actor understands that to achieve their objectives they must necessarily establish a confrontation with those editorial lines that threaten or contradict their principles. In this “fight for the truth”, populism recognizes that opinion leaders and large media corporations guide the agenda of public opinion, and therefore have a direct impact on citizen conversation.

The fundamental reason why populism perceives the media as enemies is that they also act as intermediary institutions between citizens and political power, reflecting the political plurality and heterogeneity of a community. That is, and as seen in the first chapter, they are actors who harm the construction of the homogeneous identity that populism pursues. Basically, they represent a threat to national identity. Consequently, they belong to the “caste” (position of Podemos), to the “establishment” (position of Trump), to the “empire” (position of Chávez), to the “power mafia” (position of López Obrador).

Curtailing freedom of expression and limiting independent media spaces is typical of some populist actors. Once the medium is removed, the vacant space is not left free but is occupied by those platforms or media servile to the populist. What is ultimately sought is not simply to silence a voice but to replace it by another that appears to be critical.

Paraphrasing the Libertador, Simón Bolívar, Chávez (2010)²¹ came to remember part of his thought: “Bolívar said it: the first of all forces is not the cannons, not the tanks, not the bombers,

21 Chávez highlights the importance of public opinion (2010, April 11). TeleSURtv. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5jWqMQFqCM>

it is the force of public opinion". More recently, Steve Bannon (Pereda, 2017)²² recognized in the media, not only a mediator who shapes reality to manipulate the truth of President Trump's administration, but also a political actor: "The media should be embarrassed and humiliated and keep its mouth shut and just listen for a while (...) You're the opposition party. Not the Democratic Party. You're the opposition party. The media is the opposition party".

From this point, which frames and represents some of the confrontations of populist leaders in Latin America, Europe and now the United States, the populist actor sets out to fight a "battle for the truth", a struggle assumed by disadvantaged populism and under the symptoms of the victim. Populism concludes that media systems, dominated by the powers, are inevitably contrary to the interests of the people. In this context, it draws a world where it is at a communicational disadvantage and is a vulnerable subject in the face of media corporations. In addition, the people is the eternal victim of an information block perpetrated by its enemies (Waisborg, 2014)²³.

The populist actor takes action and strives to fight a communicational fight:

The opposition of the private media to these governments is notorious, as is the reaction of the latter who seek to configure some type of media that is loyal to them. Thus, a couple of political actors who are open to the facts appear,

22 Cristina Pereda, El principal asesor de Trump dice que los medios "deberían mantener la boca cerrada". El País (2017, January 29). Retrieved from: https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/01/26/estados-unidos/1485466794_287171.html

23 Silvio Waisborg, *Vox populista* (Madrid: Gedisa, 2014).

but who are shrouded from the institutional point of view (that is, they are not openly assumed as actors working for a certain position): on the one hand, the hegemonic media as opposition; on the other, the state or private media linked to the state, which act as pro-government media (Follari, 2013: 10)²⁴. “The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @CNN, @NBCNews and many more) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American people. SICK!” the president posted on Twitter. He soon deleted the tweet and posted a revised message that called out ABC and CBS as well.

On February 17, 2017, the President of the United States, Donald Trump posted on his Twitter account: “The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN and many mor) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!” (Twitter account @realdonaldtrump, 2017). An investigation published by The New York Times (2017)²⁵ collects some of Trump’s statements and criticisms of the media, considering only less than two months since his administration took office:

And I want you all to know that we are fighting the fake news. It’s fake – phony, fake. (...) When the media lies to people, I will never ever let them get away with it. I will do whatever I can that they don’t get away with it. They have their own agenda, and their agenda is not your agenda (points to the public) (...) Unfortunately much of the media in Washington,

24 Roberto Follari, “Medios, populismo y poder en América Latina”, *Íconos Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 17, no. 2 (2013): 9-13.

25 Donald Trump, El discurso inaugural completo de Donald Trump, con análisis y comentarios. The New York Times (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/es/2017/01/20/el-discurso-inaugural-completo-de-donald-trump-con-analisis-y-comentarios/>

D.C., along with New York, Los Angeles in particular, speaks not for the people, but for the special interests and for those profiting off a very, very obviously broken system. The press has become so dishonest that if we don't talk about it, we are doing a tremendous disservice to the American people. Tremendous disservice. (...) The media is a very, very dishonest weapon and we will see what happens. Not all of them, and I have to say, I always clarify that not all of them (...) It's happening. We are getting to the point where things are not reported, and in many cases the dishonesty of the press does not want to report it (...) In a large group of media, dishonesty, deception, and deceit make them the opposition political party. The media is a disgrace and I have been badly rated from the beginning. The New York Times has rated me badly from the beginning".

Trump links the press with the political establishment. On the other hand, it assumes that the work of that press threatens the homogeneous unity of the American people.

On February 24, 2017, the White House press secretary, Sean Spicer, decides not to hold the usual daily press conference and in turn summons journalists to a meeting without the presence of cameras. This implied the prohibition of the entry of some media to said meeting, such as The New York Times, CNN, Politico and the Los Angeles Times. The reactions were immediate from these media claiming that it was another attack from the Trump administration to the press. The executive editor of The New York Times, Dean Baquet, assured for a piece by journalists Davis and Grynbaum (2017)²⁶: "Nothing like this has

26 Michael Grynbaum and Julie Hirschfeld, Trump Intensifies His Attacks on Journalists and Condemns F.B.I. 'Leakers'. The New York Times (2017,

ever happened at the White House in our long history of covering multiple administrations of different parties. We strongly protest the exclusion of The New York Times and the other news organizations. Free media access to a transparent government is obviously of crucial national interest”.

In Trump’s case, they do not even deny the strategy and even the need to establish a political dispute in terms of a battle, which includes cutting off spaces and excluding.

The president of Ecuador until 2017, Rafael Correa, maintained a tense relationship with the media during his ten years in office. In an interview with the TVE medium and the journalist Ana Pastor (2012)²⁷, he stated: “The media are one of the great planetary problems. Private businesses dedicated to mass communication, dedicated to providing a public good, fundamental for societies, that is a basic contradiction (...) I think there should be more public media, more community media that do not have that conflict: profit and mass communication. When a medium belongs to the bank, what do you think will prevail? The private interest or the public interest?” (own translation).

To avoid early disappointment with populist promises, the leader identifies the adversaries; the political dynamics itself would not allow it to carry out everything that is proposed in a short time, which inevitably puts its legitimacy at risk before the people who yearn for change. To the extent that these promises

February 24). Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/us/politics/white-house-sean-spicer-briefing.html?_r=0

27 Rafael Correa and Ana Pastor, Rafael Correa vapulea a Anita Pastor en Los Desayunos de TVE. HRW cartel de Sinaloa. Bancos. Cuba [video archive]. sucreranda Hugo Chávez Venezuela (2012). Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMQEvZ4itoo&t=1065s>

are not kept, it will be easier to hold the adversary responsible for the breach. The same could happen from political action in the opposition, not necessarily from the government. This is how Hernández Velasco explained it (2017)²⁸ in *El Mundo*:

Marine Le Pen doesn't care about having the vast majority of the media against her. Rather the other way around: she almost appreciates it. Like Donald Trump, the leader of the National Front (FN) has found the perfect channel to reach the general public, to convey her messages and political slogans, and, at the same time, avoid the criticism and attacks launched against her by numerous newspapers and TV channels. Their secret weapon is social media (...) Traditional media, also in highly civic and cultured France, are facing increasing discredit. They are victims of the same recurring complaints that are launched against politicians: that they live in a parallel reality, that they do not speak the language of the people, that they have shady interests in mind, that they constitute an elite that helps to perpetuate the system settled down (own translation).

The confrontation with the media is then for the populist leader a primary and simple way of facing the problem. The most difficult, but in the end the most profitable, which is the generation of consensus, is thus far from what the populist leader does and also from what Mouffe already raised about the associative society that was explained in the first chapter.

28 Irene Hernández Velasco, "El arma secreta de Marine Le Pen", *El Mundo* (2017, April 25). Retrieved from: <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2017/04/25/58f892cb22601d1f5f8b463a.html>

If politics is recognized in principle as conflict, then the confrontational attitude of the populist leader is logical. In the same interview with Ana Pastor cited above, Correa was restrictive:

Much more important than building roads, hospitals, schools, is building the truth. Lies have destroyed Latin America, there is too much lying (...) please, get down now, demolish those myths, those stereotypes of evil politicians persecuting poor journalists and poor media. It's the other way around. Those agents, those media are the ones that have supported the dictatorships, the ones that have kept quiet about the repressions, about the bank robberies, and they are the ones that persecute the governments that really want to change things (own translation).

The former Ecuadorian president ratifies what Chávez preached from Bolívar. Many things can be done, problems can be solved, even fulfilling the promises of the most difficult campaigns, but if behind all the management there is no construction of communicational elements that allow the legitimacy and sustenance of the majority, it will do little good.

Podemos considers the private media as part of its political enemies: "What attacks freedom of expression is the existence of private media (...) If two billionaires own what can be read, what can be heard and what that you can see, that is a risk...That is the duopoly or oligopoly" (Iglesias, 2019).

Le Pen (2017)²⁹ repeats a similar pattern from ideological antipodes. "They hysterically campaign for protégé Emmanuel Macron. They shout defending the freedom of the press when they are criticized and whine for having lost the trust of the people".

Being in the government or in the opposition is irrelevant regarding the analysis. The strategy and construction is the same.

The media as allies of the people

Populism needs the media, even those identified as enemies, to achieve its political ends (Ward, 2019)³⁰. And vice versa, the media also take advantage of populist discourse insofar as it is an instrument at the service of the news that moves emotions (Espirito Santo & Figuerias, 2019)³¹, in other words, because it allows them to sell controversies. Feelings end up dominating public debate (Arroyo & Fernández, 2019)³². The clearest confession of this interested exploitation is found in the statements of the executive director of the American television network CBS, Leslie Moonves

29 Le Pen, on the media: 'Hacen campaña de manera histórica por Macron'. (2017, February 27). La Gaceta. Retrieved from: <https://gaceta.es/noticias/le-pen-los-medios-campana-manera-historica-macron-27022017-1420/>

30 Stephen Ward, *Ethical journalism in a populist age*, (Londres: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc, 2019).

31 Paula Espirito Santo and Rita Figueiras, "Populism and the media factor: a comparative perspective on the Portuguese presidential candidate," in *Populist Discourse. Critical Approaches to Contemporary Politics*, ed. Encarnación Hidalgo-Tenorio (London: Routledge, 2019), 65-80.

32 Enrique Arroyas Langa and Victoria Fernández Ilundain, "The politics of authenticity in populist discourse: rhetorical analysis of a parliamentary speech by Podemos," in *Populist Discourse. Critical Approaches to Contemporary Politics*, ed. Encarnación Hidalgo-Tenorio (Londres: Routledge, 2019), 17-32.

(2016)³³, who stated: “Trump may not be good for the United States, but he is good for CBS”.

Thus, and given the existence of media factors that could be adverse to the lines of populist governments and that put into question the action of the populist actor, they resort to the opening of new media, with an editorial line that sometimes becomes more political propaganda than informational content. This reality is much clearer in the use of public media, of the State, once the populist comes to power. Media trenches are established to defend against corporate domination of the media. Regardless of how long they have been in power, inequality will recur, it will never end. This narrative works to justify policies considered necessary to transform the present order (Waisborg, 2014)³⁴.

Beyond the Venezuelan case, which will be discussed later, the case of the populist left can be cited in the figures of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, both former presidents of Argentina. Both were great allies of Hugo Chávez. Their constant fight with Grupo Clarín³⁵ began once the government decided to promote Law 26,522 on Audiovisual Communication Services,

33 Paul Bond, Leslie Moonves on Donald Trump: “It May Not Be Good for America, but It’s Damn Good for CBS. The Hollywood Reporter, (2016, February 29). Retrieved from: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/leslie-moonves-donald-trump-may-871464>

34 Silvio Waisborg, *Vox populista* (Madrid: Gedisa, 2014).

35 Grupo Clarín’s investments in Argentina in the last 20 years have been very significant; always with a central mission: journalism and the media. Their activities contributed to the configuration of an important Argentine cultural industry and generate qualified and genuine employment. Its vision and business model emphasize investing, producing, informing and entertaining while preserving Argentine values and identity, taking care of business independence as a reinsurance for journalism. (<http://www.grupoclarin.com.ar/institucional/origen-evolucion>)

popularly known as *Ley de Medios*, which certainly threatened Grupo Clarín's position of media dominance.

According to Repoll (2010: 51)³⁶: "Adding up only these three major categories –'government management' (38 headlines), 'corruption' (24 headlines) and 'the government's relationship with the media' (18 headlines)–, all denouncing or questioning the national government, 64% (80) of 124 titles on the main Clarín cover story are against the government, thus generating a markedly negative image of the presidential administration of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner".

Among the complaints made by Clarín, the provisions of the law on the possession and use of licenses are addressed. In this case, the number of licenses established was less than the number already owned by Grupo Clarín. Therefore, inevitably, Clarín would have to appeal for the divestment. The *Ley de Medios* was approved, which was a setback for Grupo Clarín and the need for this media emporium to abolish television and radio licenses.

The law sought to limit the power of Grupo Clarín and restrict its performance. As a result, the ruling party managed to get the media group to get rid of 260 broadcasting licenses (Waisborg, 2014)³⁷. In this way, in the case of the Kirchners in Argentina, the struggle for political power not only focused on occupying spaces of power in the government and in other instances, but also on occupying media spaces that would allow the government to limit the action of political enemies.

36 Jerónimo Repoll, "Política y medios de comunicación en Argentina. Kirchner, Clarín y la ley", *Andamios* 7, no. 14, (2010): 35-67.

37 Silvio Waisborg, *Vox populista* (Madrid: Gedisa, 2014)

The case of Rafael Correa in Ecuador has other connotations:

The state activism of President Correa has been strongly resisted by the private media out of their own interests, almost always protected by the appeal to an all-embracing “freedom of the press”. The Correa government in 2012 stipulated a minimum wage floor for press workers, which also affected the private media (...) The government has not known how to involve civil society in its confrontation with private media owners, not even workers in the sector. For this reason, it has established a lot of official propaganda in the media controlled by the State, in a policy that, by not involving social actors, becomes somewhat “de-democratizing” (Follari, 2013: 12)³⁸.

According to Waisborg (2014)³⁹, the Ecuadorian case with regards to Correa coincides with Chávez’s Venezuela in terms of the appropriation/purchase of media with public resources. When Correa won the presidency, the State owned only Radio Nacional de Ecuador; by mid-2012, the State had almost 20 communication media, including television, radio and written press.

The case of Evo Morales in Bolivia has not had as great an impact as it has in Ecuador. However, policies were also applied against the private media, and community media were created for the communication policy of the Government of Evo Morales. This was the case of the National Radio System for Native Peoples (RPO’s). According to official data from 2011, they gathered more than 40 stations in AM and FM, and planned to open 60 more. The Venezuelan Government provided technical and financial

38 Roberto Follari, “Medios, populismo y poder en América Latina”, *Íconos Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 17, no. 2 (2013): 9-13.

39 Silvio Waisborg, *Vox populista* (Madrid: Gedisa, 2014).

support for the purchase of equipment (...) Also, the stations are owned by indigenous communities but the Government maintained ownership (...) For Morales, this project aims to give "a voice to those who do not have a voice ", and promote "bottom-up communication"⁴⁰.

Before addressing the specific case of Hugo Chávez with respect to the elements that have been described, a theoretical framework is presented with respect to the populism-internet relationship.

Internet as a threat and as an opportunity for populism

Faced with the disruption of information technologies, populism faced the same dilemma as the traditional media. On the one hand, it posed a greater risk because the broadcasting capacity is potentially unlimited, which runs counter to the claims of homogenizing the collective demands of populism. On the Internet, each individual has an open speaker for the world. However, it was soon observed that the development of social networks promoted selective exposure, information bubbles were created and mobilization was enhanced, although not so much persuasion. The main social networks adapted well to populist discourse, where simple and brief responses to complex, emotional, spasmodic problems predominated, and where the image prevailed over the argument. For this reason, the populists took advantage of the digital environment to capture the disenchantment of the population and turn it into a potential supporter.

40 Waisborg, *Vox populista*.

In addition, social networks not only served as the perfect sounding board for any extremist leadership or party but also allowed them to address their potential voters directly, without the media filter (Hernández Velasco, 2017)⁴¹. For example, the American consultant and writer Rob Salkowitz (2017)⁴² affirmed that Twitter had been a fundamental instrument of communication with the world for the election of Donald Trump. From the beginning of his term, the American president can unleash his followers against his opponents, including Republicans, if they do not follow the line of his political agenda.

In an administration like Donald Trump's, where one of its main opponents has been precisely the media, Twitter represents a tool that allows to bypass the regular filters that the media have, taking into account their opinion leaders, editorial lines and respective economic and political interests. Political strategist Roger Stone claimed:

I think the social media campaign, the alternative media campaign, was built out of necessity. It improved with the arrival of Steve Bannon to the campaign. He has a superior knowledge of alternative media, combined with the fact that he is something of an adventurer and a revolutionary, a person who can think outside the box. He was the perfect person at the perfect time. If you look at Trump's messages in the last three weeks, they are almost perfect. They are the

41 Irene Hernández Velasco, "El arma secreta de Marine Le Pen", *El Mundo* (2017, April 25). Retrieved from: <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2017/04/25/58f892cb22601d1f5f8b463a.html>

42 Rob Salkowitz "Trump's 20 million twitter followers get smaller under the microscope. *Forbes*" (2017, January 17). Retrieved from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/robsalkowitz/2017/01/17/trumps-20-million-twitter-followers-get-smaller-under-the-microscope/#7d90fbba4407>

forgotten Americans appealing to the silent majority. It's us against them (Kirk et al., 2017)⁴³.

Trump is a current example of the populist leader who, within that battle with the media, appeals to directly influence, not only his own electorate but also the international news agenda, through social networks.

A study published by El País (Viejo & Alonso, 2018)⁴⁴ analyzed the exponential growth in the last quarter of 2018 of two political forces classified by some as populists: *Vox* and *Podemos*. The report analyzes, among other things, six digital platforms: Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, as well as visits on the web. The case of Vox is significant: "At the beginning of 2018 it was the fourth most visited political formation after PSOE, Ciudadanos and Podemos. They only surpassed PP. In September, before the event in Madrid with 9,000 supporters, they surpassed all with 223,017 visits. And in October, coinciding with the rally, they tripled: 612,658".

The second element of analysis is Instagram. Here, Vox capitalizes better on followers:

Vox is the political party with the most followers on Instagram. It is the network that has grown the most in 2018, according to the latest report from the Association for Digital

43 Michael Kirk, Mike Wiser; Philip Bennett; Jim Gilmore, Gabrielle Schoender, Trump's Road to the White House [Television series episode]. In Aronson-Rath, R. (Executive Producer), PBS Frontline. T35, Ep 7. United States: WGBH-TV (2017).

44 Manuel Viejo y Antonio Alonso, "La estrategia de Vox en redes sociales: ya es el primer partido en Instagram, la plataforma con más jóvenes", *El País* (2018, December 16). Retrieved from: https://elpais.com/politica/2018/12/12/actualidad/1544624671_005462.html

Communication in Spain, as well as the most used by users between 16 and 30 years old. Its account opened in April 2016. The flag, the unity of Spain, and the Catalan independentists are present from day one. The photos are simple, unedited, seeking to attract the youngest voter: "Student! Don't give up on Selectividad, with your study you are already rendering a great service to Spain." The most successful content is a video attacking Podemos: "We don't want the Podemites, Bolivarians, and Communists to like us. We have come to represent #EspañaViva".

In the case of WhatsApp, the study reveals that "it is the most used social network in Spain. The formation of Santiago Abascal used this channel during the Andalusian elections to launch massive messages instantly". After starting in June 2018 and in just days they gained 2,000 users. Today, political organizations keep these numbers secret.

In the final part of the study, observations are made about the management of social networks by Jair Bolsonaro, the so-called "Brazilian Trump", a right-wing populist leader. The journalist from the same media outlet, Tom Avendaño, reviews how Bolsonaro bypassed the legal filters of television advertising and developed them for the Facebook platform, where he had more than 8 million followers. And he adds: "He also relied on the other great Brazilian platform: WhatsApp. In that country of 147 million voters, 120 use the app daily, most up to 30 times a day. Suddenly, 81% of his voters used the tool, compared to 59% of his great rival in the elections, Fernando Haddad, according to the Datafolha institute". In this way, thanks to the development of a direct contact strategy, he was able to reach audiences in a massive way. Avendaño affirms that the line followed by Bolsonaro

responds to the one Trump used in 2016: "saturate the messaging market. In the case of the Republican politician (Trump), they managed to make 50,000 daily variations of each ad according to the information they obtained from each of the millions of users on Facebook" (Viejo & Alonso, 2018)⁴⁵.

Conclusion

Without an enemy, there is no people. For populism, it is not possible to build the notion of the people if, first and above all, the enemies, the anti-people, are not defined. The people will understand each other only to the extent that their enemies are understood. Therefore, its unity and homogeneity are built from what precisely threatens these two apparently virtuous conditions. More important than defining who makes up this people, first and perhaps enough will be to define the agents that threaten them. Once that happens, the populist's "good people" will be built.

In this sense, and based on the fact that populism will continue in force as long as the enemies have legitimacy, the media will not cease to have visibility and prominence in the confrontation that populism engages and proposes. Even in a totalitarian system, where the media could be hijacked, those media enemies will then be foreigners. For example, in left-wing Latin American populism, Fox News, CNN, among others.

Finally, the battle that populism proposes against the media poses several dilemmas for the owners. Being victims of populist power, the editorial lines could find themselves in the obligation –by an instinct of defense and survival– to further politicize their

45 Ídem.

contents, to seek alliances in the party ranks with agents opposed to power and to accept the confrontation with populism. The risk, ultimately, results in a partisanship of the medium, a loss of meaning in the purpose that naturally corresponds to it (to inform), and in a suitable place for politics to only develop on the television set, in the radio booths, and in the opinion columns, no longer in the street and in the headquarters of political parties.

Conclusions

One of the purposes of *Democratization* is to manifest our intellectual work and contribute to the national and international political debate. Those of us who work in this editorial project are historically woken and, with humility, we place our reflections and findings at the service of all. Frequently, when studying other political processes, I value with special admiration the stories of those who stopped to think “on the spot” about the reality that they had to live. These documents have been especially helpful to me in discovering the social and political humor of complex and sobering moments. I am sure that the time will come when it will be necessary to study the Venezuelan political process and I hope that this initiative will contribute to such purposes.

This issue includes articles that follow up on two topics that we identified as important in previous issues and that deserve our attention: the concepts of "autocratic learning" and "transformation". The first refers to the path of authoritarian improvement that the Chavista revolution has crossed since 1998. It describes the accumulation of experiences that has allowed it to grow in resilience and overcome deep crises. Recognizing these dynamics can allow to anticipate decisions and reactions with the aim of disturbing the comfort of a regime that looks like teflon, because everything is slipping. The longevity of the Chavista dictatorship forces us to continue delving into this issue. I can see that it will be necessary for the medium term to precisely analyze the political process that began on January 23, 2019, to see what the regime has learned during this period. There remains a debt in intellectual analysis and in the exercise of politics: democratic

learning. It will also be convenient to stop and ponder over what this struggle has taught those of us who resist the dictatorship.

The second concept is that of transformation. In Venezuela, people started talking about transition in 2014. The massive protests that took place in the country that year introduced the term to public opinion. Seven years separate us from that moment and we have not yet managed to achieve political change. Defining when a transition starts is a complex task. There are seldom milestones that mark change. Generally, this precision corresponds to the authors who later approach the phenomenon to study it. It is often even difficult to reach consensus around that detail. In Spain, for example, there are those who say that the transition began with the murder of Carrero Blanco; others, with the death of Franco, and some, with the Law of Political Reform. In Chile, the dissensions are greater. In my studies I locate the beginning of the transition in the promulgation of the 1980 Constitution, because that document –lacking in legitimacy– contains the mechanisms to which the Democrats turned to advance towards freedom. Nonetheless, some authors place it in the referendum of 1980. What I want to say with this is that we are still in the eye of the storm, and only once it has settled will we be able to establish milestones to describe what we experienced.

What we can see in the midst of the storm is the dimension of the damage left by the autocratic wake of the Chavista revolution. If in 2014 we began to talk about transition, in 2020 it is convenient to start reflecting in terms of transformation. The destruction of Chavismo is so profound that it requires broad levels of reconstruction. Does this demand of reality mean that liberation must be achieved through rupture? No. A transformation can be initiated by means of an agreed liberation

or by rupture. Let us remember Germany in two moments: 1945 and 1989. There is no relationship between transformation and the genre of political change. What can make a difference is the deliberate transformative disposition of those leading the process. That is what we encourage with the contributions offered by the development of this concept in Venezuela.

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