

Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective

Populism is best understood as a Manichaean worldview linked to a characteristic language or discourse. Chavismo, the movement that sustains Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, is a paradigmatic instance of populism. Using a novel cross-country dataset on populist discourse, combined with extensive data from within Venezuela and across other countries, this book demonstrates that populist movements can be understood as responses to widespread corruption and economic crisis. The book analyzes the Bolivarian Circles and government misdeeds in Venezuela, revealing how populist ideas influence political organization and policy. The analysis provides important insight into the nature of populism, including its causes and consequences, and addresses broader questions about the role of ideas in politics.

Kirk A. Hawkins is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Brigham Young University. He is a coauthor of *Latin American Party Systems* (Cambridge University Press). His work on political parties and populist movements has been published as several book chapters and in journals, including *Comparative Political Studies*, *Latin American Research Review*, and *Third World Quarterly*.

Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective

KIRK A. HAWKINS

Brigham Young University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-0-521-76503-9 — Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective
 Kirk A. Hawkins
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521765039

© Kirk A. Hawkins 2010

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2010

First paperback edition 2013

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

Hawkins, Kirk Andrew, 1969–

Venezuela's Chavismo and populism in comparative perspective / Kirk A. Hawkins.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-76503-9 (hardback)

1. Venezuela – Politics and government – 1999– 2. Populism – Venezuela.

3. Chávez Frías, Hugo. I. Title.

JL3831.H39 2010

320.987-dc22 2009029820

ISBN 978-0-521-76503-9 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-61783-4 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
1 Introduction	I
2 Chavismo, Populism, and Democracy	15
3 Measuring the Populist Discourse of Chavismo	50
4 Party System Breakdown and the Rise of Chavismo	86
5 The Causes of Populism in Comparative Perspective	131
6 Populist Organization: The Bolivarian Circles in Venezuela	166
7 Populist Policy: The Missions of the Chávez Government	195
8 Conclusion	231
<i>Appendix A: The Populist Speech Rubric</i>	251
<i>Appendix B: Test of the Sampling Technique</i>	255
<i>Appendix C: Test of Interaction Effects</i>	259
<i>References</i>	263
<i>Index</i>	287

List of Tables

3.1	Average populism scores for Latin American chief executives	<i>page 76</i>
3.2	Average populism scores for non-Latin American chief executives	77
4.1	Union density in Latin America	101
4.2	Responses to “country’s most important problem”	106
4.3	Multinomial logit of vote choice (issues)	115
4.4	Multinomial logit of vote choice (candidate attributes)	120
4.5	Multinomial logit of vote choice (full model)	121
4.6	Estimated probabilities of voting for Chávez	127
5.1	Multivariate regressions on populism	155
5.2	Predicted level of populism, given corruption and economic growth	158
6.1	Attitudes toward regime types	185
6.2	Democratic methods	187
6.3	Content analysis of definitions of democracy	188
6.4	Attitudes toward social change	189
6.5	Membership in organizations and activities	191
7.1	Missions by origin and area of emphasis	203
7.2	Expected attributes of the Missions	215
7.3	Data sources on the Missions	216
7.4	Model results for Missions	219
B.1	Analysis of random samples of Lula and Cárdenas speeches	256
C.1	Multinomial logit of vote choice (with interaction)	260

Preface

This book was born out of the last stages of my dissertation research nearly 10 years ago. I first traveled to Venezuela in 1999 to study why the traditional system of political parties had broken down. For several months I interviewed former party leaders and scholars of traditional Venezuelan politics, a process that gradually educated me in the history and workings of the old Punto Fijo system. However, as I worked, it became clear that something new and important was taking shape in Venezuela, something that very few academics were studying yet. This was the movement led by Hugo Chávez, or “Chavismo,” which was taking the place of the old party system.

Seeing Chavismo as the real story was my first step in a process of discovery; the second step came when I began to understand the distinct qualities of Chavismo as a populist movement. My academic training is in the “new institutionalism,” meaning that I study the causes and consequences of formal rules and political organization, particularly political parties, using rational-choice theory. Hence, when my first interviews of Chavista leaders took place in December 1999, I focused on the leadership of what was then the movement’s official party, Movimiento V República or MVR. My attempts to analyze Chavismo were essentially descriptions of MVR’s organization and ideology. However, in early 2003, a colleague invited me to present a conference paper discussing Chavismo as an example of populism. This was an unfamiliar concept to me, and as I explored this academic literature, I was introduced to a set of ideas that gave me extraordinary understanding of what was happening in Venezuela. I began to see that Chavismo went well beyond the confines of MVR and that most of the action was taking place outside the party. This was a populist movement, and the party played only a minor role in the larger workings of this different kind of organization.

I also began to see the potential for studying the concept of populism, one that has been particularly vexing for social scientists. By treating populism as a discourse or worldview – as a set of fundamental beliefs subconsciously expressed and shaped by language – I could understand how Chavismo had transformed Venezuelan politics, what had given rise to the movement, and

what its implications were for politicians and policymakers. It also seemed to challenge or at least elucidate the dominant rational-choice approach to political science that my colleagues and I used, highlighting an additional set of ideas or meanings that were essential for understanding political behavior. But the concept needed clarification and had never been quantitatively measured or treated in significant comparative perspective. I decided to write a book about Chavismo and populism that would allow me to do this.

Most of the data in this book have been collected since then. In June–July 2004, just prior to the presidential recall election, my students and I conducted the survey of members of Bolivarian Circles found here in Chapter 6. The data on the government's social programs (Chapter 7) were collected during July 2005. In spring and summer 2006 I conducted the cross-national analysis of populist discourse that provides much of the comparative data in this book. Finally, in August–September 2007 I cooperated with the Latin American Public Opinion Project at Vanderbilt University in conducting the first version of the AmericasBarometer in that country, a source of some of the data found here in Chapter 7 on the government's social programs and later in the Conclusion.

The recent emergence of other populist movements in Latin America that are strongly linked to Chavismo (including the one led by Evo Morales and the indigenous Movimiento al Socialismo in Bolivia, and the PAIS Alliance of Rafael Correa in Ecuador) makes my earlier decision seem prescient. Populism is becoming a catchphrase again among academics, policymakers, and journalists. However, much of the old conceptual confusion still prevails, and the potential for the discursive concept of populism to enhance our scientific understanding of politics – not just in Latin America or developing countries, but in the advanced industrial democracies as well – is largely unrealized. I hope this book will shed light on these other movements and provide a template for expanded approaches to the study of political institutions and ideas.

Acknowledgments

Portions of this book have been published elsewhere, and I wish to acknowledge these institutions for providing copyright permission to reproduce some of the data here. A Spanish-language version of Chapter 5 was published in a volume edited by Carlos de la Torre and Enrique Peruzzotti (*El retorno del pueblo: Populismo y nuevas democracias en América Latina*. Quito, Ecuador: FLACSO). Portions of this same chapter were published in an article in *Latin American Research Review* that I coauthored with David Hansen, one of my undergraduate students and now a graduate student in economics at Stanford University. And the cross-national analysis of populist discourse in Chapter 3 was published in *Comparative Political Studies*.

I give special thanks to Kurt Weyland, who invited me to participate in that crucial conference panel of 2003. He provided additional comments on other parts of this book, especially the cross-national description in Chapter 3. My gratitude also goes to Dan Hellinger for suggesting that I study Chavismo at the grassroots level, advice that led to my study of the Bolivarian Circles. He provided ongoing support for other phases of the research, particularly the study of the Missions, and his compelling criticisms forced me to temper some of my early thinking about populism. María Pilar García-Guadilla of the Universidad de Simón Bolívar in Venezuela provided advice and material assistance for the studies of the Circles and social programs, and her criticisms of my initial findings regarding the Circles helped me reformulate the version seen here. Her students were some of my best sources in Venezuela, especially Ana Maldonado. Special thanks also to Jennifer McCoy for comments on early drafts of the Circles and Missions studies. Ken Roberts read an early draft of the analysis of Venezuela's party system breakdown in Chapter 4. David Smilde provided comments on multiple portions of this manuscript while convincing me that there was a need for additional scholarly work on Chavismo. David Hansen, coauthor of the original study of the Bolivarian Circles, looked over the draft of Chapter 6 and gave his permission to reproduce much of our original data. And two anonymous reviewers made suggestions that greatly

improved the manuscript; my sincere thanks to them for giving it such a careful reading.

Many of my colleagues at Brigham Young University (BYU) have looked over portions of this book or given feedback on the original prospectus, as well as tremendous encouragement during my early years as an academic. These include Ray Christensen, Scott Cooper, Jay Goodliffe, Darren Hawkins, Wade Jacoby, Quin Monson, Dan Nielson, and Ken Stiles. I am extremely grateful for their patience. And, of course, my deepest gratitude is to my wife, Eliza, who looked over several versions of the entire manuscript. Her work made it possible for this book to be written, and I consider it her book as much as mine. Our young children, Andrew, Edward, and Lucy, were very patient with me when I had to spend evenings and some weekends away from them. I hope they will be proud of the results.

Particular efforts at data collection in these chapters benefited from the advice and help of numerous colleagues and research assistants. These include, in addition to many of those already mentioned, Kent Burggraaf, David Coon, Moises Costa, Jorge de Azevedo, Emily Ekins, Laurie Evans, Gary Hatch, Dave Jackson, Eric Lynn, Icce Mejía, David Olave, Jeff Richey, Guillermo Rosas, Aaron “Bruce” Russell, Anne Sidwell, Matt Singer, Richard Sudweeks, Julia Velicev Story, Elizabeth Zechmeister, and, above all, Lili Cruz and Mayavel Amado.

Several survey datafiles used in this book come from generous institutions and friends. I would like to thank the Center for Political Studies at the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración (IESA) in Caracas for making available the databases of the Baloyra-Torres survey, the CIEPA/DOXA survey, and the RedPol survey. I am also grateful to José Enrique Molina for early access to the 2000 World Value Survey in Venezuela, as well as the questionnaire of the Baloyra-Torres survey. Special thanks to Damarys Canache, who provided me with the datafile for her 1995 Venezuela Public Opinion Survey (hereafter simply the Canache survey), and to Ruth Collier and Jay Seawright for making available some of the data from their 2003 survey. Additional data in this book come from a set of interviews that I conducted with leaders of the major political parties in the fall of 1999, May 2000, and February 2003. All but the latest interviews (February 2003) were carried out under a promise of confidentiality and are referenced using codes rather than names; however, interview transcripts or copies of notes are available from me on request.

Research for this book has been funded by various sources, including the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences at BYU, the BYU David M. Kennedy Center for International and Area Studies, and the BYU Department of Political Science. The study of the Bolivarian Circles particularly benefited from funding by the BYU Department of Communications. Some of the preliminary work on this book was funded by several grants from programs at Duke University, including a Mellon Foundation dissertation research travel

Acknowledgments

xiii

grant from the Duke-UNC Program in Latin American Studies; a Tinker Foundation Dissertation Research Travel Grant from the Duke Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies; a summer travel award from the Duke Program on Democracy, Institutions, and Political Economy; and dissertation research travel awards from the Duke University Graduate School. Part of this work was also supported by the National Science Foundation through a Dissertation Improvement Award (Grant No. 9905823). As always, however, any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this book are mine and do not necessarily reflect the views of these supporting institutions or my colleagues.