

Popular Party. The remaining 17 seats were scattered among a variety of small non-aligned Peronist, center-left and provincial party delegations (most consisting of a single senator).

In the chamber election, the FPV and its allies won a total of 60 seats. Let's Change came in second with 47 seats, with Macri's PRO leading the way with 27 seats followed by the UCR with 18 and the CC and FCSC with one each. UNA and its allies won a total of 17 seats, eight in Massa's political base of the Province of Buenos Aires. Rodríguez Saa's CF won two seats, both in San Luis, which he and his brother (both Peronists) have run in a quasi-feudal manner since 1983. The Progressives (two), FIT (one) and CHUSOTO (one) won the remaining seats. Women accounted for 44 of the 130 deputies elected, or 34%.

As of January 1, 2016 the largest chamber delegation was the FPV at 95. The 89 Let's Change deputies maintained four separate party delegations under a broad alliance umbrella: PRO: 41, UCR: 40, CC: 5, FCSC: 3.

The UNA delegation consisted of 29 deputies, followed in size by the Civic Front for Santiago with six (all from Santiago del Estero) and the CF with four (all from San Luis). The remaining 34 deputies were scattered across 23 delegations, with three three-member delegations and 15 single-member delegations.

Party switching is common in the Argentine Congress (Jones and Micozzi, 2013), and, especially with a non-Peronist president, we can expect quite a bit of volatility in delegation membership over the next two years. Even in the short period between the October 25 election and their assumption of office on December 10, more than a dozen legislators switched their allegiance from one delegation to another.

4. An electoral first and governing as a minority party president

Every democratically elected president in Argentina since World War Two had, up until the election of Macri, belonged to one of two partisan families: Peronist or Radical. In addition, Macri's PRO is arguably the first Argentine political party in more than sixty years to establish a true national presence, the result of a dozen year party-building effort by Macri and his supporters. In addition to its control of the presidency, the PRO's 41 deputies represent 13 of Argentina's 24 provinces, with the party also occupying the

governorship of the Province of Buenos Aires and the de facto governorship (chief of government) of the City of Buenos Aires. Almost half (46.15%) of Argentines live in these latter two jurisdictions.

When Macri assumed office on December 10, 2015, he did so with his Let's Change alliance holding less than one-quarter of the seats in the senate and less than two-fifths of the seats in the chamber, with his own party, PRO, possessing a mere 4 of 72 senators and 41 of 257 deputies. These proportions represent record lows for an incoming Argentine president, significantly less congressional support for instance than that enjoyed by the only other non-Peronist to occupy the presidency in the last 26 years, the UCR's Fernando de la Rúa (1999–2001), who resigned two years into his four-year term.

If Macri is going to avoid governability problems, he will most likely need to eventually form alliances (short and/or medium term) with different Peronist factions and/or many of the 19 opposition governors, to whom many senators and deputies directly respond (Spiller and Tommasi, 2009). Unlike in neighboring Brazil, Chile and Uruguay (Chasqueti, 2008), Argentina lacks a history of successful coalition government (Jones et al., 2009), and Macri's presidency will be a crucial test case for whether or not Argentine politicians and parties are willing and able to successfully adopt some form of coalition model like their neighbors.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2016.05.001>

The 2015 parliamentary elections in Venezuela

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 13 March 2016

Received in revised form

10 May 2016

Accepted 16 May 2016

Available online 30 May 2016

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1. Background

The opposition scored a convincing victory in the parliamentary elections held in Venezuela on December 6, 2015, a clear turning

point in the period since Hugo Chavez came to power in 1999. For the first time, the ruling party lost a national election (apart from the constitutional referendum of 2007) and did so, moreover, by a wide margin, since the opposition won the qualified majority of two-thirds in the National Assembly. The Chavistas saw these elections as a referendum on their 'socialist' model, while for the opposition, the elections were an opportunity to do something about the critical situation of the country, with its democratic institutions undermined, human rights under threat, and an acute socio-economic crisis.

The parliamentary elections held five years earlier revealed that the ruling party was becoming less competitive. Although it won the ballot, it obtained just under a three-fifths majority (Hidalgo, 2011). However, at that time the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) was still led by Hugo Chavez, whose charismatic leadership was decisive in securing a further victory in the presidential elections of 2012. His death in 2013 changed the political scenario.

In April 2013 his heir, Nicolas Maduro, won a controversial election by a narrow margin. Lacking the charisma of his predecessor and with less support within Chavista movement, the new President turned to the military to stay in power. In addition, he decided to radicalize the authoritarian components of the electoral-authoritarian regime. Maduro was challenged by various opposition groups, which denied his legitimacy, even though they were unable to prove their accusations of electoral fraud. Subsequently, the opposition joined the intense, and in some cases violent, socio-political demonstrations that took place in early 2014, driven by lack of prospects for the large parts of the middle classes, particularly young workers and students. Some radical opposition groups called for the "exit" (resignation) of the President, intensifying the already highly polarized climate and aggravating the tensions within the opposition coalition, in which demands for Maduro to "exit" did not count on broad support. The more tense climate brought, among other things, greater political persecution, the death of 43 people (most of them anti-government demonstrators but also bystanders and police officers) in circumstances that the courts have yet to clarify, and the imprisonment of demonstrators and opposition leaders. This obviously affected the future electoral strategy of the main opposition groups united in the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD).

Moreover, by the time of the elections, the phase of relative economic stability (2003–2013) founded on the large oil revenue that funded the rising social spending which was essential for political stability, had given way to a critical socio-economic situation. On the one hand, the economic model was close to collapse due to the controls on prices and exchange rates, state intervention, huge public spending, a large public debt, monetization of deficits, etc. On the other hand, the petro-State ran into serious difficulties due to the sharp fall in oil prices beginning in July 2014 and the stagnant productivity of the public sector. As a result, in the two years before the election the country had undergone a period of sharp economic contraction and accelerating inflation, running, indeed, at the highest rate in the world. In this context, shortages of foodstuffs and basic goods had become commonplace, and the public utility services were on the verge of collapse. The disastrous economic performance brought other devastating effects, including a sharp fall in wages, higher unemployment and greater job insecurity, more poverty, etc. (Alarcón et al., 2016). Problems of insecurity and crime had also got much worse.

2. Electoral system

Venezuela uses a parallel voting system, with two separate tiers using proportional representation and plurality,

respectively. A total of 70% of the members of the National Assembly are elected by plurality in a combination of single-member districts (SMD) and multi-member districts (MMD). The remaining 30% are elected by proportional representation (PR) in closed lists in 24 federal entities into which the country is divided. Of the seats elected by plurality, 68 are elected in SMD and 19 in MMD. Fifteen MMD districts elect two deputies each, and four districts elect three members each. 51 seats (30% of the total) are elected from party lists using proportional representation (PR). Twenty-one states have two PR seats each, and another three have three seats. Three extra seats (about 2% of the total) are elected by the indigenous population, voting in a first-past-the-post race in three SMD covering different neighboring states.

The allocation of seats among states leads to a high degree of malapportionment, due to the constitutional provision that assigns three deputies to each state, regardless of its population. This means that the less populated states are overrepresented, whereas the most populated are underrepresented. The malapportionment score for all the seats in the AN in 2015 was approximately 29%. For the PR tier, the score is still higher (about 75%) than for the total of seats and the plurality tier (41%).

As predicted by Duverger's Law, the Venezuelan electoral system favors a two-party system. Since 2010, the vast majority of voters have been split between two coalitions: the Great Patriotic Pole (Gran Polo Patriótico, GPP), made up of the PSUV and other minor, mainly extreme-left, parties, on the one hand, and the heterogeneous MUD in the other. The electoral system provides incentives for the opposition parties to form coalitions, despite their significant programmatic divisions. There are many small parties in-between these political poles, but, with the exception of the PPT (Fatherland for All) in 2010, none has won a seat since 1998.

In the 2010 elections the ruling party had resorted to gerrymandering (Hidalgo, 2011), albeit to little effect. In the 2015 elections, acting with evident political intent, the National Electoral Council (CNE) manipulated the population projections of the National Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) to justify transferring four seats of one constituency to another, to one which was even in another state. (Súmate, 2015; IIDH, 2016: 42–43). Since 70% of the seats in the assembly are elected in SMD, the electoral authority can influence the outcome by changing the number of deputies to be elected in each district by simply increasing or reducing the population estimates for each.

3. Election campaign

Officially, the election campaign lasted just three weeks, starting on November 13. In practice, it began as soon as the candidates were selected, the political parties taking advantage of the absence of pre-campaign regulation. It was a rough campaign with outbreaks of violence (including the mysterious death of an opposition leader) due to the climate of political polarization, the country's economic difficulties and the fact that, for the first time, the ruling party went into the campaign 20–30 points behind the opposition coalition in the polls. The large number of minority parties and independent candidates never had much chance of success.

The MUD held primaries on May 17, 2015 to select 40 candidates in 33 constituencies that had historically voted for the ruling party. Some 543,000 voters (around 7.4% of the electorate) participated. The rest of the candidates were agreed upon by the various forces within the MUD. Unlike in 2010, all forces managed to agree on a single ballot. For its part, the PSUV chose 98 of its 113 candidates through primary elections in 87 districts on June 28. Some 3,162,000 citizens, or over 16% of the electoral register, took part, a

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