Venezuela
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Venezuela is considered authoritarian from 1919 through 1945. From 1908 to 1935 Venezuela was ruled by a "Venezuelan caudillo" dictator Juan Vicente Gómez Chacón of the Liberal Restoration Party (PLR) who "retained absolute power" (US Library of Congress 1990). From 1945 to 1957 Venezuela is considered as a non-democracy. Indeed, Geddes (2003) codes Venezuela as a hybrid regime (mix of military and personalistic regime) from 1948 to 1957. After 1958, this country was considered among the most stable countries in the region. In 2006, this stability was broken by Hugo Chávez who inaugurated a new period of presidential autocracy in the country.

According to US Library of Congress (1990), "The dictator's principal power base was the army. Disproportionately staffed with tachirense personnel [natives of the state of Tachira], the army was used to destroy all of Gómez's regional foes. This "national" army was prudently provided with high salaries and generous benefits, the most modern weapons, and instruction from the Prussian-trained Chilean military. But Gómez's most important means of eliminating political foes was his ubiquitous secret police force."

Ewell (1984, 59) suggests he depended "on the army, the emerging socio-economic elite, the Church, foreign oil companies, and his family and other loyal tachirenses." He destroyed political parties and repressed challengers through the secret police. According to Powell (1984), Gomez' rule allowed elites to enrich themselves and they thus did not do anything to challenge them. "Gomez ran the nation as the private preserve of his own family and friends (Powell 1984, 20)." Powell suggests that Gomez was a "personal rules" who managed to stay in power by offering "incentives and rewards" to his "Tachirense circle," his clique. Based on these descriptions, we code Gomez's rule as personalist.

In 1935 Gómez died of natural causes and his minister of war General José Eleazar López Contreras, Mil, served out the rest of Gómez's term. Like Gomez, Lopez Contreras was a Tachirense and a trusted aid of Gomez that Gomez had wanted to succeed him (Ewell 1984, 74). Lopez Contreras thus had the support of Gomez clique and in fact "after he finished Gómez's term of office in 1936, the Congress, all the members of which had been appointed by Gómez, selected López Contreras to serve his own five-year term in office (US Library of Congress)." However, Lopez Contreras' source of support extended beyond Gomez in that he also relied more heavily on the military. Lopez' Contreras rule thus has elements of a military regime in addition to personalist features. Firstly, he was an active general when he became the president. He refrained from creating a political party, while the military hierarchy had been maintained during his presidency; personal loyalty did not take most part in appointment, as it did in Gomez administration. During his presidency, he founded National Guard, which was one of the four components of armed forces in Venezuela, and Contreras became the commander in chief. The National Guard participated in operating national security by collaborating with the state and municipal political bodies; it attempted to control the protests and any upbringings against the presidency (Martz 1966). Trinkunas (2006, 33) confirms that several number of high-ranking officers were in their government, although the number was declined from 19 in 1937 to 4 in 1941. Given the continued influence of Gomez' clique and the features of a military regime, we

code Lopez Contreras assumption of office as the beginning of a military-personalist hybrid. His entry into office is this a minor SOLS change.

In 1941 "López's Congress selected yet another tachirense minister of war Isaías Medina Angarita [of the Venezuelan Democratic Party (PDV)] to replace López" (US Library of Congress 1990). This is not a SOLS change because the beginning of his rule marked "politics as usual" (US Library of Congress 1990) and Medina, another Tachirense, can be considered López' pre-designated successor. The military-personalist regime continued and Medina also continued López path of liberalization. Even though his administration pursued modernization policies, they lacked a popular base of support. So, the leftist opposition demanded more: direct and universal suffrage, the modernization of the public service, the eradication of corruption, and in general they demanded more democracy through the organization of the masses.
By the end of 1944, the communists (Union Popular Venezolana-UPV) and the medinistas (followers of Medina Angarita) reached a compromise to join forces in the municipal and state legislative elections. On the other side, there was the Accion Democratica (AD) party. The rules indicated that the voters elected the members of the state legislative assemblies; they chose the national senators, who then elected the president. The UPV and medinistas alliance won the elections, and AD's defeat convinced their leaders of the need to modify these rules and procedures to have some probabilities to win. At the same time, a group of young military officers formed the Union Patriotica Militar (UPM), pursuing these and other goals, such as a faster pace of modernization. The AD and the UPM formed an alliance that leaded the coup d'état on October 1945, beginning a period known as the Trienio. As a result, a Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno (Revolutionary Government Junta) was established and it was presided by AD leader Romulo Betancourt. Therefore, the AD controlled the government and the UPM controlled the armed forces.

The country was an autocracy in 1945, but Geddes (2003) does not code this year in one of her categories until 1948, when she codes this country as a military-personalistic regime. (Interestingly, Tarver and Frederick (2005) suggest that since the Lopez Contreras to Medina Angarita governments, Venezuela was a military regime under a democratic façade, and both military officers belonged to the so-called tachirense group.) We code a SOLS change in 1945 when Betancourt takes over from Medina Angarita because Betancourt was not the pre-designated successor of Medina Angarita and, while helping him to office, military officers, played little role in politics. We code a non-specific authoritarian regime.

Betancourt was committed to the establishment of a democratic regime. Therefore, he called for elections for a national assembly to draw a new constitution on July 1947, and for presidential elections on December 1947. In this election, Romulo Gallegos, the AD (Democratic Action) candidate, was elected president in the first universal, direct, and secret elections held in Venezuela. No SOLS change is coded.[1] AD also won the majority of seats in the congressional elections. Gallegos was inaugurated in February 1948; however, the alliance between AD and UPM broke. As a consequence, Gallegos was overthrown in a military coup in 1948. In the following 10 years, the right-wing military dictatorship dismantled any democratic efforts. Three military officers assumed power in the new Junta Militar de Gobierno (Military Government

[1] Note: coded as non-democratic by us.

Junta): Delgado Chalbau, Perez Jimenez, and Llovera Paez. This junta formed a cabinet, and elected Chalbau as president. Under this regime AD was dissolved and its leaders were forced into exile or arrested.

The change from Betancourt to Gallegos is not a SOLS change because Gallegos was Betancourt's party candidate and pre-designated successor. The change from Gallegos to Delgado Chalbau is a SOLS change because Chalbau was not Betancourt's pre-designated successor. Delgado Chalbau's assumption of power begins a military regime that would stay in place until 1957.

Delgado Chalbau was assassinated on November 1950, and Suarez Flamerich assumed power as leader of the junta, but really Perez Jimenez was the de facto leader of the country. This is not a SOLS change since they belonged to the same military regime. Under popular pressure, Perez Jimenez called for a new presidential election on November 1952 which he seemed certain to win. The initial results showed Villalba (URD) leading by a large margin; so, no more results were announced, and on December the "official" results proclaimed the Perez Jimenez's Frente Electoral Independiente (Independent Electoral Front) as a winner. Therefore, the members of the junta resigned, and the military ratified to Perez Jimenez and named as "provisional" president. In December 1957 Perez Jimenez attempted to legitimize his government by holding a plebiscite. The results showed 85% in favor on his government, but this result was fraudulent. Moreover, the major opposition groups (AD, COPEI, PCV, and URD) formed the Junta Patriotica (Patriotic Junta), which joined to the clandestine Frente Universitario (Universitary Front) organized a series of strikes and riots against the regime. As a consequence, the air force and the navy united with the Church, press, and politicians overthrew the dictator in January 1958. A new Junta was formed, consisting of five military members, under the leadership of Admiral Larrazabal and Dr. Edgar Sanabria. These are not SOLS changes because all of them belonged to the military, and also because Larrazabal and Sanabria are considered as interim rulers (see Nichols and Sala 2010, 127; Ellner and Morse 2007, 52) and each governed less than 12 months while a new president was elected.

In December 1958, elections were held to elect a president as well as members of the Congress. The major parties ran candidates for presidency. Finally, Romulo Betancourt, the AD candidate, won the election. The transition from the Junta to the new elected president Betancourt is a SOLS change. Betancourt relied not on the military but the AD party and its voters. He was democratically elected. Venezuela began a period marked by a remarkable stability, into a populist system of conciliation, a kind of consociational democracy which lasted more than 30 years. We code SOLS changes according to the rules for presidential democracy during that time.[2]

In 1992, Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez les an unsuccessful coup attempt. When Chávez was released from prison, he became a symbol of the opposition. So, in the 1998 elections, Hugo Chávez's Movimiento Quinta Republica (Fifth Republic Movement – MVR) won and Chávez became president. This was a SOLS change. Despite the coup in 2002, there is no leadership change in this year. Since 1999 to the end of our observation, Hugo Chávez has remained in power. Although the Worldstatesmen lists several leaders in 2002 when Chávez was

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[2] Ramon Jose Velasquez, who came to power briefly in 1993 was an interim president.

ousted from office three days after a coup by the military, the time out of office was brief and Archigos (Goemans et al. 2009) does not list these leaders in the coup.

Since 2004 there was an acceleration of authoritarianism in Venezuela, because Chávez achieved complete control of all check-and-balance institutions, including the unicameral National Assembly, which after the opposition boycott of the December 2005 elections contained not a single opposition legislator. For that reason we code Venezuela as democracy only until 2005. This development suggests that we might need to code a SOLS change without leadership change during that time, which is not in our rules. After his auto-coup Chávez does not anymore rely on his voters. Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2013) code the country as a personalist regime since 2006.

In October 2012, Chavez was reelected as president. On October 11, 2012 Chavez named foreign minister Nicolas Maduro as his vice president amid rumors about the state of Chavez's health. In December 2012, Chavez announced his cancer had returned and left the country to undergo surgery in Cuba. He named Vice President Nicolas Maduro as his handpicked successor, should he become unable to rule (Council on Foreign Relations). Chavez missed his January 2013 inauguration, sparking a debate over whether he was still legitimately president. Chavez returned to Venezuela on February 18, 2013 to continue his treatment in Venezuela (Council on Foreign Relations).

Vice President Nicholas Maduro announced on March 5, 2013 that Hugo Chavez had died. Maduro served as acting president from March 5 until elections were held on April 14, 2013 (Shoichet and Ford 2013).[3,4] On April 14, 2013 Maduro narrowly won the presidential election with just 50.6 percent of the vote (Council on Foreign Relations). Because Maduro was the pre-designated successor of Chavez, this is not considered to be a SOLS change. In May 2018, Maduro was reelected to another six-year term in a vote marred by an opposition boycott and claims of vote-rigging (BBC News 2018).

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[3] According to Archigos v 4.1, Maduro took office on March 5, 2012. This is a coding error. Multiple sources, including Worldstatesmen.org, the US Council on Foreign Relations, BBC News (2018), Reuters (Wallis 2013), and CNN (Shoichet 2013), Moros served as acting president after Chavez's death, from March 5 until April 14, 2013. Accordingly, we code the leader transition from Chavez to Maduro as occurring on March 5, 2013.

[4] Because Hugo Chávez was prevented by illness from taking the oath for his next presidential term, which he nevertheless was deemed to have begun on January 10 2013, it was initially unclear whether the vice president, Nicolas Maduro Moros (as provided in the constitution for the regular case of the death of a sitting president), or the president of the National Assembly, Diosdado Cabello Rondón (as provided for in the case of an elected president dying before being sworn in), became acting president. The government adopted the first interpretation. This was confirmed by the Supreme Court on March 8, 2013, when it ruled that Maduro became acting president immediately on the death of Chavez and ceased to be vice president at that time. We follow this interpretation.

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