

Opponent Review of Bachelor Thesis

Michelle Stephanie Salguero Márquez:

The flaws of the political opposition in Venezuela in changing the regime of Nicolás Maduro (2014-2020)

The analyzed bachelor thesis focuses on the interaction between the opposition and the incumbent regime led by Nicolás Maduro between 2014 and 2020. The author aims to identify the causal mechanism between opposition strategies and organization and their impact on the opposition's ability to effect change in the regime. The author states her objectives and research question: How has the interaction between the political opposition in Venezuela and the incumbent government impacted in the opposition's chances of changing Nicolás Maduro's regime (2014-2020)? The author divides her analysis into seven sections corresponding to the main events during the period in question, which align with the stated question and objectives. However, it would be beneficial for the author (and reader) to explicitly explain why the chosen period ends in 2020. I suppose it was chosen according to the date of the parliamentary election, but it should be clearly stated from the very beginning.

While the theoretical part is very rich on presented academic literature, I found it lacking in deeper integration with the analytical part. The author provides a useful overview of the current state of art in relation to her stated objectives. I appreciate that the author utilized a variety of primary and secondary sources, including archival material and online resources. Additionally, interviews with opposition members and journalists were conducted to gain insight into the strategies and their retrospective evaluation of events and situations. The method of analysis and data collection is well explained.

The bachelor thesis is well structured, with clear objectives. From a formal standpoint, it is slightly confusing that the introduction and conclusion are included among the numbered chapters, resulting in the main body of the thesis starting with chapter 2 instead of 1. Apart from this minor detail, the structure is logical and clear, aligning with the objectives of the thesis. Most of the sources are cited correctly according to the citation norm. However, more attention should be paid to direct citations where the author neglected to include page numbers (p. 11, 15, 24).

Regarding the analysis of La Salida (2014), it is worth mentioning that it led not only to violence and repression but also to the imprisonment of opposition political leaders Leopoldo López and Antonio Ledezma, who, along with María Corina Machado, organized the protest. Despite its significance, the author did not touch upon this fact until the subsequent section dedicated to the opposition's success in the parliament in 2015 (p. 26). Additionally, considering the increased political persecution and violence following La Salida and in the subsequent years, it undoubtedly contributed to "the opposition decomposition and demoralization" (p. 30), as well as the other factors mentioned by the author. In the last section titled "2020: Operation 'Gedeón'", it becomes clear that the closing event of the analysis is logically the result of the parliamentary election (or rather the partial abstention of the opposition as the last straw leading to Maduro's "victory"), rather than just the failed operation.

Apart from these remarks, it is worth noting that the author consistently attempted to contextualize the analysis by considering important and relevant factors such as economic crisis, international involvement, and public opinion (as stated in the introduction).

Michelle Stephanie Salguero Márquez focuses on the importance of understanding the dynamics of opposition-government interaction in Venezuela under Maduro (2014-2020) and how the strategies and organization of opposition parties can impact their ability to effect regime change. The conclusion that the opposition unity and coordination are essential for effectively challenging the incumbent regime is well supported by empirical data and aligns with academic research. The author demonstrates the ability to conduct independent analysis. Overall, the bachelor thesis is highly commendable, and I recommend it for defense.

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